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# THE SERMON BIBLE.

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MATTHEW I.–XXI.

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# PREFATORY NOTE.

IN the New Testament the same plan will be followed as has been found so acceptable and useful to preachers in the Old Testament. Increased use will be made of manuscript sources, and the range of Authors quoted will be widened. In particular it is proposed to give specially translated outlines of some of the best foreign sermons by recent Authors, or to give references to their books.

## MATTHEW.

Although Matthew is more frequently preached from than any other book in the Bible, the literature upon it is not remarkable. Among scientific commentaries the best is that of Dr. James Morison, in the revised edition published by Hodder & Stoughton. Dr. Monro Gibson's commentary in the "Expositor's Bible" is a carefully executed and complete monograph. Dr. Thomas's "Genius of the Gospel" may also be mentioned.

Oct. 1956 Gift H.C. Ryan

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# ST. MATTHEW.

**Chap. i., ver. 1.—"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."**

NOTE some points in the genealogy of our Lord.

I. Amongst those whom St. Matthew records as the ancestors of Christ according to the flesh, there are only four female names introduced, and they are precisely those four which a merely human historian, anxious to throw in everything which might seem to be to the honour of Christ, and to omit everything which might seem to detract from that honour, would have been desirous to have passed over in silence. The persons whose names are given are Thamar, Rahab, Ruth (a Moabitess), and Bathsheba. One thing is clear, that there was no thought in St. Matthew's mind of throwing any false lights upon his Lord's history and character; and another thought might have been in his mind, which led him to set down these names,—the wonderful manner in which God brings His own purposes about by means which seem at first sight to be as little conducive to them as possible, how through the apparent confusion of history, blotted by human sin, the thread of His providence remained unbroken, and connected him to whom the promises were made with Him who was the promised seed.

II. Jesus is declared by St. Matthew to be the Son of David, and therefore a member of the royal tribe of Judah, not of the priestly tribe of Levi. Christ came as a priest, but more particularly He came as a king; that which He preached from the first was a kingdom.

III. The genealogies both of St. Matthew and St. Luke trace the descent of our Lord, not through Mary His mother, but through Joseph, His reputed father. The lineage of Joseph would be legally the lineage of Jesus, his reputed Son, and on that account the Evangelists could not well have done otherwise than give *his* pedigree and not that of Mary; and yet it cannot but appear remarkable, that the lineage of our Lord should be in fact no lineage at all, that, like His type Melchisedec, He should

be without descent. The great fact in the lineage of Christ is not that He was the Son of David, but that He was the Son of man.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 185.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 1; Bishop Alexander, *Leading Ideas of the Gospel*, p. 1; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 329; A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 60; O. Davies, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 182; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 368. i. 1-17.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 1.

**Chap. i., ver. 16.—"Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."**

I. WE are reminded here that our Blessed Lord has a human ancestry.

II. Our Lord's ancestry was both Jewish and Gentile.

III. Our Lord's ancestry was lowly.

IV. Our Lord had a royal ancestry.

V. The Saviour has an immortal ancestry.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 46.

REFERENCES: i. 18.—A. Whyte, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 120; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 89. i. 18-25.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 355; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 10.

**Chap. i., ver. 21.—"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."**

I. SALVATION from sin is the great necessity for man. This is a fact of universal observation. It is also a fact of universal consciousness. Men are so constituted that they cannot doubt that ultimate happiness is impossible unless they can be delivered from that which they know to be a great curse in this world, and which they also know will be their ultimate ruin, if persisted in.

II. Jesus has undertaken this work. "He shall save His people from their sins," therefore His name is Jesus, the name Jesus signifying a Saviour. The term salvation, as here used, means merely deliverance, or safety from some tremendous evil; it is often found in the Bible, and includes in it very generally, in addition to mere deliverance, the result of it—eternal happiness and enjoyment in heaven with the people of God.

III. Why is it that so many persons fail of this salvation? (1) Many persons fail of it because they have not abandoned

reliance on themselves. It is the most obvious thing in the world, that many persons are living, not to God, but to themselves. Now, wherever this principle is manifested it is certain that persons are not saved from sin; for what is sin but living to self and not to God? Self-seeking is the very essence of sin. (2) Multitudes are not saved because they seek forgiveness while they do not forsake their sins. Another reason why men are not saved from sin is that they have really come to regard justification in sin as a means to save them from it. Justification in sin is a thing impossible. A man must be in a state of obedience to the law of God before he can be justified. (3) Many make the mistake of cherishing hope rather than holiness; instead of working out their own salvation, they seek to cherish a hope that they shall be saved.

C. G. FINNEY, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1566.

REFERENCES: i. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1434; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 39; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 39; *Ibid.*, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 259; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 9; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 345; W. M. Taylor, *Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 1; C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 48; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. ii., p. 45. i. 22, 23.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 1; *Ibid.*, *Expository Outlines of Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 1; *Ibid.*, *Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 2; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 1; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 160.

### Chap. i., ver. 23.—"God with us."

THE great essential doctrine of Christianity lies in these few words, *God with us*. To hear of Christ having come on this earth for a little time, and then having gone away again, would not be to us glad tidings of great joy. The first apostles would not have won men to the Gospel if they had preached an absent Jesus, One who had left His Church and gone to heaven. The great secret of our Christian joy lies in this fact, that we believe in a present, not in an absent Jesus; one who is Emmanuel—God with us. Try to get hold of that great fact of our Lord's presence, and then you will see what results flow from it.

I. First, that fact should make us humble. If the Son of God, King of kings, and Lord of lords, chose to come to this earth in the lowliest manner; if He chose a manger to be born in, a workman's home to live in, the commonest of clothing and of food, surely we, who profess to be His followers, have no right to be proud.

II. The fact of our Lord's abiding presence ought to make us brave. If God be for us, and with us, who can be against us? No temptation need be too strong to be conquered; no difficulty need be too hard to be surmounted by those who know that God is with them—Emmanuel.

III. The fact of our Lord's abiding presence ought to make us good to each other. Look on your fellow-men, and learn from the Incarnation to respect man, *every* man, as wearing the flesh which Jesus wears. Learn to look upon all men as brethren, who have a claim upon us in their need. There is a noble family in Italy whose name of *Frangipanni* means breakers of bread, that is, for the poor. We who are bound together in one family with Him who gives us our daily bread, not only bread for the body, but bread for the soul, should all be breakers of bread with our brethren, helping those who have need to a share of our blessings; for thus alone can we give something to Him who freely giveth all things—our Emmanuel, God with us.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 39.

Chap. i., ver. 23.—"Emmanuel, God with us."

THESE words contain in themselves the whole history and course and means of man's redemption. In their highest sense they express that unfathomable mystery that God hath been with us, in our nature, that the Creator has taken His creature into Himself; but, by virtue of that gracious mystery, they declare God's presence in His Church, and with and within the souls of her members.

I. Such, then, is the twofold force of the title "Emmanuel, God with us," God in Himself, but with us, and such as we; not with us merely by mercy, or care, or providence, or protection, but with us as one of us; not restoring us by His word, as He created us, but by becoming as one of us; not by raising us by the hand when fallen, but by humbling Himself to us; Himself sinking to us, that He might rise with us, placing at God's right hand, united with Himself, and as part of Himself, the nature which He had redeemed.

II. And if He be such to us in deed and in the fulness of His purpose, if He have been thus God with us, and purposeth that we should be thus with God, how should He not be with us now in all things if we be His? What but sin can hide His face from us, in that it blinds our eyes that we see Him not? Why should He not be with us on our way, who is Himself the

Way? To us, as to the disciples, He shows Himself in different forms, but He is the selfsame Saviour and Lord in all. He is our home and sure abiding-place; and all things in this earth may speak of Him, for we dwell in a redeemed world, which His sacred footsteps have trod and sanctified. Only, if we would truly see Him, we must seek to have the mirror of our hearts cleansed, that it may receive His glorious image. "The pure in heart," He hath promised, shall see Him. Love is the eye whereby the Spirit sees God. Disputing about holy things but blinds us. If we love, and as we love, we shall see and shall receive. While the world jangles our Lord comes secretly to us, if we, with pure hearts, draw nigh to Him.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 54.

REFERENCES: i. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1270; H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 107; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 9; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 324; vol. x., p. 341; *New Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 1; A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 3rd series, p. 169; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 15; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. i., p. 15.

**Chap. i., ver. 24.—"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him."**

I. No man that we read of in Scripture was so highly favoured as St. Joseph, in respect of being constantly near the person of our Saviour. From Christ's birth to His own death, which was at least more than twelve years, and very likely a good deal longer, Joseph was the entrusted guardian of our Lord, the minister of God, especially called and raised up to watch over that holiest childhood and youth, and to protect His blessed mother. Judging from God's ordinary dealings, we cannot but suppose that he must have been, more than almost any one, prepared and made meet for God's Kingdom, who was permitted for so long a time to exercise a ministry so near to God Himself.

II. The life and death of the nursing father of Jesus Christ teaches us this lesson—never to put by God's warnings, but to act on them, in dutiful faith, immediately; even as Joseph, being raised from sleep, lost no time, but at once did as the Angel of the Lord had bidden him. Had he doubted and delayed, he would have forfeited the blessing, the great blessing, of abiding continually with Christ. Let us, then, lose no time, but at once begin to practise the holy purposes which the Spirit of

God may have put into our hearts, and which our good angel is waiting to encourage. There is no time like the time present.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. viii., p. 285; see also J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 149.

REFERENCES: i. 25.—*Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 198; G. Gilfillan, *Alpha and Omega*, vol. ii., p. 270; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 189. i., ii.—E. Gibson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 116. ii.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 22.

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**Chap. ii., vers. 1, 2.**

I. WE have, as it were, three classes gathered about us in this narrative, and the central figure of them all is Christ Himself. As we think of this story in connection with our Master, the first thought that strikes us is that we have here a distinct fulfilment of prophecy. It had been prophesied that to Him should the gathering of the people be. The Gentile and the Jew were found by His cradle; in Him all national distinctions are, as it were, wiped out; there is to be neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free. Round His cradle are not only the representatives of various lands, but they are brought to do homage to Him as a Child. Out of the childlike King there would arise a childlike character of all His followers.

II. Turn next from the spiritual to the temporal king. When the news of the new-born Christ was brought to Herod, "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." He feared for the stability of his throne. His heart was centred in the kingdom which he ruled, the possessions that were brought under his control. The man whose mind is fixed upon possessions as such is troubled at the thought of a righteous ruler. The man whose thoughts are fixed upon the abundance of things that he possesses, necessarily quakes when he thinks of Him whose return must strike every one of them into the abyss away from Himself.

III. Look at the character of the wise men. They were great men. But their greatness is magnified by the greatness of their faith and their moral courage. Faith is, after all, a kind of heaven-born insight. These men saw the star. There were thousands about them who looked upon the same star, and saw no meaning in it. It led them through the long desert to kneel before the Satisfier of their hopes. So it is with Christ's children in this world. They see by an insight of faith what other

men do not see. There is a light that others do not see, there is a hand that others cannot perceive, there is a voice that others cannot hear, that calls them to go forward.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 36.

REFERENCES: ii. 1, 2.—C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 31; J. R. Bailey, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 361; J. C. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 97; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 20. ii. 1, 2, 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1698; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, Nos. 14, 15. ii. 1-3.—A. Whyte, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 28. ii. 1-12.—W. Poole Balfern, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 401; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 21; vol. iii., p. 17; S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 264; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 52; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 14.

Chap. ii., ver. 2.—"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

I. "WHERE is He?" Such was the cry of the old world before Christ came. Men had lost sight of God; even the Jews, the chosen people, had corrupted themselves with idols, till the God of their fathers had become to them as a dream. Many a one, besides the men of Athens, had erected an altar to the unknown God. From the wise man seeking after the truth, from the captive groaning in his dungeon, from the sad watcher by the dying bed, the cry went up, "Where is He? Where is God, that we might believe on Him?"

II. The answer came at Epiphany. Among the wild Bethlehem hills was born One who was a light to lighten the Gentiles, who was come to give the knowledge of salvation to His people, to set the captive free, to make the poor, crushed slave a man indeed, to wipe away the tears of the sorrowful, to heal the sick, and to raise from the dead those who lay in trespasses and sins.

III. Surely this is what the Epiphany teaches us, that the true life of every one of us is revealed in the life of Jesus Christ; that to be humble, to be gentle, to be obedient, to go about doing good, and to perform God's will in our daily work, is to be like Him whom the wise men worshipped long ages ago in Bethlehem. "Where is He?" Not only in heaven, pleading, as our great High Priest, the unfailing merits of His sacrifice, but here on earth, with His faithful Church.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 52; see also *Waterside Mission Sermons*, vol. i., No. 5.

THE Epiphany, like the other manifestations of our Lord, partly veils and partly discloses His glory.

I. As in those other instances, also, the disclosure is made

to persons of a certain character, and to those only. It is not hard to see what sort of mind these wise men were in; how earnest, not only in obtaining what heavenly knowledge they could, but in obeying what they knew. They lived in a country, and most likely belonged to a profession, in which the observation of the stars was a great part of their daily business. And as the shepherds, when the angel was sent to them, were watching over their flocks by night, *i.e.*, in the honest exercise of their daily calling, so this star was ordered to meet the eyes of these men, so learned in the signs of the heavens. It seems in both cases to signify that God loves to visit, with His heavenly and spiritual blessings, those whom He sees diligent and conscientious in their daily duty.

II. Are we not, so far all of us, like the wise men, in that, when children, we too have a sort of star in the East to guide us towards the cradle of our Lord? We are carried to church, we are taught to pray, we learn more or less of Scripture words and histories; God gives us notice, in various ways, of that wonderful Child who was born at Bethlehem to be King of the Jews. Now these notices and feelings, if they are indeed sent by the Most High, will guide us, more or less directly, to Jerusalem, that is, to the Holy Church of God, the city set on a hill, that cannot be hid.

III. The wise men were ready to follow wherever God's providence might lead them, however slight and even doubtful the notices of His will might be. So ought it to be enough for us to know the next step in our journey, the next thing God would have us to do, with something like tolerable certainty. One step before them is as much as sinners in a troublous world should expect to see.

IV. The wise men did not mind the trouble of their journey to find the Lord. This surely may reprove our indolence and want of faith, who are so seldom willing to leave our homes, and go ever so little way thence, where we are sure the young Child is to be found; but rather put up with idle excuses, the more profane because they make a show of respect, of God being in one place as much as in another, and of our being able to serve Him at home as acceptably as in church.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vi., p. 15.

I. The success of the wise men in their search for the Saviour should teach us that they who are really anxious to find Him will never miss Him for lack of proper guidance.

II. The example of the wise men should make us ashamed of allowing difficulties, or even dangers, to hinder us in our search for the Saviour.

III. God graciously adapts His guidance to the necessities of His creatures.

IV. We also have seen His star—the glorious star of the Epiphany. Have we, like the Eastern sages, come to the Saviour to worship Him? Do we seek for Him where He is ever to be found—in the services and ordinances of His house?

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 52.

REFERENCES: ii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 967; T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 408; G. T. Coster, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 392; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, pp. 279, 289; W. Meller, *Village Homilies*, p. 30. S. Baring-Gould, *The Birth of Jesus*, p. 76; *Ibid.*, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 123. ii. 4-6.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1634. ii. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 354. ii. 8.—W. Norris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 305; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 24; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 306. ii. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 15; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 227.

Chap. ii., ver. 11.—"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

I. IN proportion to the obscurity which hangs about this story as a fact is its clearness and usefulness when considered as a symbol. To Christ and before His throne in heaven vain it were to offer the gifts of the Eastern magi, gold, frankincense, and myrrh; but as they brought of the best and richest things which God had made to grow or to exist in their, by nature, unyielding and barren earth, so we also should bring and should offer the best and noblest powers which God has implanted in our otherwise dull minds and helpless bodies. So that, whatever we have of precious gifts, whether of body or mind—for the question is here rather of natural gifts than of spiritual graces—these all should be offered to the service of Christ, as the only sacrifice of gratitude which it is in our power to render.

II. We can resolve beforehand to do all to the glory of God; but when the actual work comes, and interests us deeply for itself, and for its immediate earthly objects, then it is hard—nay, without much habit, impossible—that the spirit of worship

and sacrifice should be at hand, together with the spirit of energy; and that we should, distinctly and consciously, hallow all our active thoughts and doings by devoting them to the service of Christ. It is hard, and without habit, impossible; and yet without it, who can be saved? For if the most lively portion of our life be not sanctified, if our best be offered to idols, and only our vacant hours and thoughts, or some little portion of them, be offered to God, what is it but to offer Him the lame and the blind and the worthless, in the spirit of a slave, who gives no more than what he is afraid to refuse? In all our different callings, Christ, in His goodness, allows us to glorify Him, and to benefit our brethren; in all we may offer to Him our gold, our frankincense, and our myrrh; whatever accomplishments of body or mind, whatever faculties, whatever affections He has given us most abundantly.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 140.

THOSE who know the habits of the Eastern mind will conclude, as a matter of course, that the gifts of the Magi were designed to be symbolic, and this symbolism is happily neither doubtful nor far to seek.

I. For gold is undoubtedly the offering to a king, the offering of the outer life and visible product of all human action. Gold is, in one word, concentrated power over the material and visible world, the world of nature and the world of human action. Now to the material and visible world very much of our life is necessarily given. The real question, therefore, is, how shall we use the gold of life? and what shall we do with it? We do not need to be taught that, except as a means of some further good, it is in itself worthless and unsatisfying. The Epiphany lesson says very plainly, "Offer the gold of life to God, in the Lord Jesus Christ."

II. So far for the outer life. But there is an inner life in the soul of each of us which the gold of the outer life may serve to influence, but which it can never satisfy. And what is to be done with this inner life? The gift of frankincense is the offering due to God only; it signifies the adoration of the soul within, and we offer it to God, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Of the significance of the gift of myrrh there can be no question. Used to embalm dead bodies, myrrh is the symbol of suffering and of death. What is the significance of the gift as it applies to us? Surely it throws light on the one dark and terrible mystery of our human life. We cannot explain

away the mystery of evil after the fashion of the shallow optimism of days gone by, and still less with the despairing pessimism of our day. We shall still hold the belief that it subserves the purposes of a righteous God, and that the myrrh that signifies it is the last and best offering to God. In the Lord Jesus Christ the Gospel consecrates suffering and death as a sacrifice, and it takes away the mysterious power of evil as the final and transcendent manifestation of the love of God.

BISHOP BARRY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 17.

WHATEVER more there may be—and there is much more—in the visit of the wise men to the manger-cradle at Bethlehem, there is at least the lesson of consecration. These wise men prostrated themselves before this little Child. They did not keep their wisdom to themselves. They had no greater joy than in emptying themselves of their treasures, and bestowing them in humblest adoration upon Him. To every man there comes the old choice of the Greek mythical hero—the choice between virtue and pleasure, between good and evil, between duty and frivolity, between consecration to Christ and subjugation by some other master. Think of a few of the ways in which this call for a choice is answered.

I. There is the answer—which is no answer—of simple indifference. A young man comes to the university, and never dreams—cannot be brought to get so far as even to dream—of the importance of this part of his career. He lives as if he had no gifts, no treasures. He simply wastes them; not necessarily, like the prodigal, in riotous living. With this form of no-consecration we cannot argue. We can but appeal to whatever of conscience or of nobleness may be yet alive, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

II. Another form of no-consecration is simple self-culture. It recognizes that we are endowed with a complex nature, every part of which is capable of being developed. We have powers of mind which can bring us into conscious contact with every form of greatness and beauty. And this development, this contact, are in themselves enjoyment of an exalted kind. Self-culture, even on a humble scale, will never disappoint. But this is short of consecration; and the Christian conscience tells us that it is far inferior to it. Consecration implies not only self-culture but self-surrender, and more than this, the joy of self-surrender. There may be consecration to a great cause,

like justice or freedom. There may be consecration to an idea which we almost personify, and even deify, like truth or beauty. But it is to a person—to some one greater, purer, better than ourselves—that consecration is at once most passionately and most perseveringly rendered. And never does consecration of self take a nobler form than when a young man prostrates himself before the feet of his Saviour, and offers to Him, in their prime, the fulness of all his powers.

H. M. BUTLER, *Cambridge Review*, Jan. 20th, 1886.

REFERENCES: ii. 11.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 54. ii. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 49; D. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 25; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. ii., p. 57. ii. 13-15.—W. Poole Balfern, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 6; W. G. Elmslie, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 401. ii. 13-18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 35. ii. 14, 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1675.

### Chap. ii., ver. 15.—"Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

I. THESE words, spoken by the prophet Hosea, were not accommodated to Christ, but were most truly fulfilled in Him. They had thus a double fulfilment, the second more glorious than the first. Nor should we err if we ascribed to them one fulfilment more. That which was on two occasions literally fulfilled, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son," is evermore finding its spiritual fulfilment in the Church of the Redeemed. It collectively is God's Son, even as one by one the true members who compose it are His sons; and they, too, have been called out of Egypt, and are living members of His Church, in so far as they have not been disobedient to that heavenly calling.

II. If we have been called out of Egypt by the voice of God to be His children, what are some of the duties which flow out from our high vocation as in this light regarded? (1) And, first, surely this is one—to leave Egypt altogether behind us, to have no going back to it even in thought, much less drawing back to it in deed. The temptation is common to all, to cast after a while a longing, lingering look on that which has been foregone and renounced, yea, even to loathe, as light food, the heavenly manna, and to yearn for some coarser fare, some of the sinful dainties of the world, in its stead. Let us watch against this temptation. Our course is onward; our salvation is before us, not behind, above us, and not beneath; behind and beneath are slavery and darkness, despair and death; before us and above us is the light of life, with Him who is Himself that light for our guardian and our guide. (2) Again, let us remember that

if we have been called out of Egypt it is not that we may enter the promised land at once; that there is a time and span between, in which our God will prove us, and humble us, and show us what is in our hearts; and that this, being a proving time, is also a sifting time; a separating of the true members of the Church from the false. Fretfulness, irritation of spirit, discontent at God's dealings with us, not, it may be, manifested without, but nourished and entertained within, is a sin against which it behoves us, partakers of a heavenly calling, travellers to a heavenly country, to be very much on our guard. It needs to be watched against the more because it may be nourished within, and seen there of God, while it is concealed from every human eye.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 91.

REFERENCES: ii. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 22; S. Baring-Gould, *The Birth of Jesus*, p. 89. ii. 16-23.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 50. ii. 18.—J. N. Norton, *Old Paths*, p. 46; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 88. ii. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1632; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 358; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2648. ii.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 381.

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**Chap. iii., ver. 1.—"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa."**

I. JOHN was the finisher of one, and the introducer of a new dispensation. His words found an echo in all hearts, for what had stirred in him had been stirring in the Jews, only they could not give it clear expression. The new epoch of thoughts took substance as the Baptist spoke. He threw into words, and in doing so interpreted, the wordless passion of a thousand souls. That it is to be a preacher.

II. Of all the blessed works which God gives to man to do in this life, there is none more blessed than that of the awakener —of the interpreter. It is the work which I would that all who see beyond the present, and whose eyes God has opened, would now undertake in England; for there is a movement abroad in society which ought to be made constant, and which needs an interpreter of its meaning. Old thoughts, old institutions are ready to perish; the old forms do not fit the new thought, the new wants, the new aspirations of men. New wine has been poured into old bottles, and the old bottles are bursting on every side. There is a stirring of all the surface waters of English life and thought, but no one can tell why they

are stirred; there is something at work beneath which no man sees, which causes all these conflicting and commingling currents, all this trouble on the upper waters.

III. There is, however, in it all that which is inexpressibly cheering. It tells us plainly that Christ is coming, not in final judgment, but in some great revolution of life and thought. We are waiting for the Sun of Righteousness to rise, and to illumine the new way on which we are entering. Let us be ready for our John the Baptist when He comes; let us pray for the Interpreter and the Awaker, who will come and say to us, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Let us live in prayer, and progress, and patient watching for His presence.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 148.

**Chap. iii., vers. 1, 2.—"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæ, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

MORALITY and Religion.

I. As far as we know of the preaching of John the Baptist, it consisted in what we should call the enforcement of moral duties. Soon after, our Lord Himself began His own ministry, and His public teaching opened with the great discourse which ever since all Christians have known as the Sermon on the Mount. And what is the general tenour of this sermon? Again it consists in the enforcement of what we should call moral duties. And still, through our Lord's teaching to the very end, the same principle ever returns, that whatever else may be needed to be His servant, this, at any rate, is indispensable, that you shall do God's will, that your life's action shall be governed by God's laws, that you shall bring forth good fruits.

II. In order to make it easier to reflect seriously on our lives, and on the true character of them, let us, as it were, gather them up under their chief heads: Principle and Temper. (1) Now we all mean by principle that strong sense of duty which keeps us straight in all cases in which we are not taken by surprise, or misled by mistake, and even in those cases never lets us wander far, but quickly checks the straying feet, and calls us to the path. The characteristic of principle is trustworthiness. The man of principle will live in secret as he lives in public, and will not gratify a wish when it cannot be known, which he would not gratify if it could be known. The man of principle is emphatically the man who loves the light, and comes to the light. Apply this to our own lives.

See how much of our lives is right by a sort of happy accident, by absence of temptation, by presence of all manner of aids. See how fitful, uncertain, untrustworthy, we often are. Look to this, and you will assuredly find much to mend. (2) It is quite possible to have right principles, and yet to spoil all by want of control of temper. High principles must of course stand above disciplined temper; but let not any Christian dream that to leave temper unchecked is a light sin in the eyes of the God of love. Not even high principle can be retained for ever against the effect of self-indulged temper on the soul.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 234.

I. CONSIDER the character, office, and ministry of the Baptist, as preparatory to the setting up of the Gospel Kingdom. He was all ardour, and courage, and uncompromising fidelity. He respected no persons, he spared no vices, he regarded no consequences. We cannot fail to observe the sectional character of John's preaching, the skill with which he addressed himself to the exposure of class errors and class sins. The ministry of the Baptist was, so to speak, a type of the dispensation of the Spirit. Just as it is the twofold office of the Comforter, first to convince of sin, and then to take of the things of Christ and show the way of propitiation; so it was the twofold office of John, first to alarm the conscience by saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and then to kindle faith by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

II. Observe the appropriate connection between evangelical repentance and any part or lot in the kingdom of heaven; between spiritual conviction of sin and the realized advent of Him who is to deliver us from its guilt and power. "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As the ministry of John generally was to prepare for the coming of Christ, so we should expect the chief object of that ministry would be to prepare men's hearts for the receiving of Christ. And these requisitions are met in that first trumpet-blast which the Baptist sounded in the ears of a slumbering world, "Repent, repent."

III. Then look at some of the resulting fruits of such preaching, as they actually followed on the stern wilderness message. First we see there were, among those who came to him, deep and humiliating convictions of sin; and these expressed openly, aloud, in the face of their friends and of the

whole world. Here we find excited in the heart the very first pre-requisite for bringing Christ within reach, the very condition which disposes to appreciate the great Physician's medicines, as well as to become the subjects of an effectual cure. John's preaching exhibited the moral order of the soul's conversion. His first care was to ensure conviction of sins. No love of Christ, and no professed care about Christ, could be of any avail without that. This done, however, then may Christ be held up; and just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness did the Baptist direct all eyes to the Crucified, and proclaim to those smitten with a sense of sin, and trembling with a consciousness of their soul's danger, "Behold the Lamb of God."

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,219.

I. REPENTANCE is not a formal or technical thing. It is simply an operation of the human mind in regard to evil things—putting spurs to the zeal of men, in going away from evil and towards good. Repentance, therefore, is merely an abandonment of evil things, in order that one may reach after better and higher things. The degree of repentance essential is just that which is necessary to make you let go of mischief and evil. Just as soon as you know enough of the evil of sin to let it alone, or to turn away from it with your whole strength, you have repentance enough. Deep and abundant convictions are beneficial in certain natures, because in these natures only such sensuous and wrestling experiences will avail, since they are coarse-fibred, since they rank low morally, and since, therefore, they need rasping. But if they are more nobly strong, if their moral nature is more sensitive, if they can turn from evil on a slighter suggestion, is it not better? For men ought to repent easily. It is a sin and a shame for them to repent reluctantly and grudgingly.

II. The highest form of repentance is a turning away from bad to good on account of the love which we bear to others; in other words, on account of that imperfect love which belongs to us in our physical and earthly relations; for we seldom find men who have the pure and spiritual impulse of love toward God so strong as to act as a dissuasion from evil and a persuasion toward good until they have actually been drawn into a divine life.

III. Repentance may be, as it respects either single actions or courses of action, a secondary impulse for some special

intent or struggle, or it may become a dominant influence, acting through long periods, and renewing and refreshing itself continually.

IV. From this great law no one can escape. There is not a man who does not need this primary experience, this turning to a higher life from the animal life; and there is no man who has a power of reasoning so high, no man who was born with such qualities, with such a balance of all the attributes of the soul, that he stands disengaged from the great law of repentance of everything that is evil, and of aspiration toward all that is good.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 100.

REFERENCES: iii. 1, 2.—J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 53. F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 110. iii. 1-3—*New Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 6. iii. 1-6.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 70. iii. 1-12.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 25; vol. x., p. 99.

**Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."**

I. THE Holy Spirit is fire. Fire all over the world has been taken to represent the Divine energy. Even in heathendom, side by side with the worship of light, was the worship of fire. Though the thought was darkened and marred, wrongly apprehended, and ferociously worked out in ritual, it was a true thought for all that. And Scripture has from the beginning used it. There is a continuous chain of symbolism, according to which some aspect of the Divine nature, and especially of the Spirit of God, is set forth to us as fire. The question then is, What is that aspect? The fire of God's Spirit is not a wrathful energy, working pain and death, but a merciful omnipotence, bringing light, and joy, and peace. The Spirit which is fire is a Spirit which giveth life. So the symbol, in the special reference in the text, has nothing of terror or destruction, but is full of hope, and bright with promise.

II. Christ plunges us into this Divine fire. I presume that scarcely any one will deny that our Version weakens the force of John's words, by translating "*with* water, *with* the Holy Ghost," instead of *in* water, *in* the Holy Ghost. Christ gives the Spirit. In and by Jesus you and I are brought into contact with this cleansing fire. Without His work it would never have burned on earth; without our faith in His work it will never purify our souls.

III. That fiery baptism quickens and cleanses. (1) Fire

gives warmth. Christ comes to kindle in men's souls a blaze of enthusiastic Divine love, such as the world never saw, and to set them aflame with fervent earnestness, which shall melt all the icy hardness of heart, and turn cold self-regard into self-forgetting consecration. (2) Fire purifies. That Spirit, which is fire, produces holiness in heart and character, by this chiefly among all His manifold operations, that He excites the flame of love to God, which burns our souls clear with its white fervours. This is the Christian method of making men good—first, know His love, then believe it, then love Him back again, and then let that genial heat permeate all your life, and it will woo forth everywhere blossoms of beauty and fruits of holiness, that shall clothe the pastures of the wilderness with gladness.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 227.

REFERENCES: iii. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99. iii. 11-16. —S. A. Tipple, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 81.

Chap. iii., ver. 12.—"Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

I. THE disciples of John were to learn (1) that their hearts were under another tillage-cultivation than their own. They could not winnow the grain, they could not separate corn from chaff. If there was no one more skilful than they were to do that, the labour had been thrown away; the corn would not supply bread to the eater, or seed to the sower. (2) They were to be sure that this discipline, if it was indeed Divine discipline, would be thorough. "He will throughly purge His floor." (3) Those who heard John speak, and understood him, must have received two lessons, at first sight inconsistent. They must have been sure that He who was conducting the sifting discipline, of which the prophet testified, over them and over the whole nation, was the Lord of the spirits of all flesh. And yet they were told of a Man standing among them, who claimed the floor as His, and could prove it to be His by purging it.

II. John the Baptist's words were fulfilled when Jesus Christ came in the flesh. They have been fulfilling themselves in every age since He ascended on high. In every age men, who have been led to discover their own great necessities, have asked indeed for one who should *forgive* their sins; but quite as earnestly for one who should *destroy* their sins, who should put an everlasting barrier between that in them which they knew to be their enemy—often their triumphant enemy—and that

which cleaved to a Friend, and sought fellowship with Him, likeness to Him. They have learned to welcome sufferings when they found that they were designed for this object. The fires were good which denoted that they were baptized with the Spirit, and that He would not leave them till He had made them what they were created to be. And so, too, the course of history and the trials of nations interpret themselves. As long as there is any strength, vitality, faith in a people, so long is there wheat, which Christ will assuredly gather into His garner; and so long that nation will be subjected to frequent fires, that its chaff, all its untruth, and baseness, and heartlessness may be burnt up; nay, it may be said, always be in such fires, for the time of our wealth, as well as the time of our tribulation, is a searching time. That is the time in which it is hardest for us to separate the chaff from the wheat, and therefore in which we have most need to recollect that there is a Lord who is doing it, and will do it thoroughly.

F. D. MAURICE, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 267.

REFERENCES: iii. 12.—Bishop Huntington, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 403; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 290.

Chap. iii., ver. 13.—"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."

THE baptism of Christ was—

I. The proclamation of His human relationship to man, and of His human relationship to God. His development had reached its height. He was clearly conscious of His Divine nature. He was clearly conscious of His complete union with our nature. But His Divine nature, so far as its omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience—so far as all that could separate Him from sharing perfectly in our humanity—was concerned, was to remain uncommunicated as yet to His natural, growing humanity; while the perfect holiness, the perfect spiritual character of God, were to be exhibited unmarred, through the medium of His humanity. Hence His baptism was the formalized proclamation of His sinless human nature. He declared by that act that, as man, He submitted Himself to the will of His Father, as shown in the mission of the Baptist.

II. John's baptism prepared those who underwent it for admission into the kingdom which was at hand; it consecrated them to the new work of the new kingdom. In their case two conditions had to be fulfilled—repentance and a sense of sin. But these conditions were impossible to Christ. He had no sense of

sin. He needed no repentance. The import of the rite was then different in His case. It consecrated Him King of the theocratic kingdom, and proclaimed to all men that His organization of that kingdom had begun. Thus, while the historical meaning of the rite varied with the subjects to whom it was administered, there was an element of preparation in it which was common to both. It consecrated the people to be members of the theocratic kingdom; it consecrated Christ to be the theocratic King; but it marked for both the commencement of a new course of life, in which the subjects of the Kingdom were to receive pardon and life; in which the King was to accomplish the work of salvation, and to bestow life upon His followers.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 236.

REFERENCES: iii. 13-17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., pp. 65, 224; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 90.

Chap. iii., ver. 15.—"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

I. WE see from the text how faithfully Jesus observed the forms and duties of religion. Nothing invests the ordinary means of grace with such importance as to see our Lord, like one of ourselves, observing them. He was independent of all means, and stood in no need of such aids. Yet, able to walk without these crutches, He stoops to our condition, that He may teach us, by His own example, the devout, diligent use of all the means of grace. (1) He prayed. (2) He punctually attended worship in the house of God.

II. Let me exhort you to the diligent use of these means of grace. Can anything be plainer than this, that if our blessed Lord did not neglect the means of grace, much less should we, can we, afford to do so?

III. Let me exhort you to a devout use of these means of grace. For true religion does not lie in them. If religion be not in the heart it is nowhere. Trust not in mere outward duties, the most scrupulous and punctual attention to them. We are to use the means of grace diligently, yet devoutly, in dependence on the grace of God, that, bringing us into His presence and under His sanctifying power, we may be saved, not only from the punishment, but from the thraldom and love, of sin.

IV. In setting Christ before you as your pattern as well as propitiation, I am not calling you to a hopeless task. It is not by fits and starts that men become holy. It is not occasional, but prolonged, continuous, and lifelong efforts that are required;

to be daily at it, always at it; resting but to renew the work; falling but to rise again. It is not with a rush and a spring that we are to reach Christ's character, attain to perfect saintship; but step by step, foot by foot, hand over hand, we are slowly, and often painfully, to mount the ladder, that rests on earth and rises to heaven.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 175.

REFERENCES: iii. 15.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 74. iii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 63. iii. 16, 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 909; A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 243. iii. 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 289. iii.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 79.

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**Chap. iv., ver. 1.—"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."**

I. WHEN the first Adam fell, by temptation, from a garden to a wilderness, from abundance to want, from empire to slavery, from heaven to hell; and when by the same steps as he descended, our Lord ascended,—the first and second Adam were not individuals; each was a representative man; each was the head of a body; each represented multitudes; each drew with him a vast membership. And as in the one many sank, so in the other many rose. We see, then, a beautiful imagery, or reason, why Christ's temptation should be just what it was, and that it should lie at the commencement of His work on earth. It was to teach us that, as a victorious tempter closed the gates of Paradise, so that tempter, conquered, should be the very reason for those gates unclosing.

II. We must always remember that our Saviour's temptation took place immediately after His baptism. So it lay at the foundation of His ministry. First the outpouring of the good Spirit, and then the assaultings of the evil one. First an unction of grace, and then an unction of discipline. And both essential preparations for after-work.

III. They know little who think that they can avoid temptation by flying into solitudes. Expect Satan when you are alone. Stand in your fullest armour when you are alone. But be assured of this—temptations make the Christian. They are the trainings on earth for works of usefulness; and they are the trainings for service in heaven. They humble the man. They prove the grace that is in him, by proving his strength. And they are the best schools for after-sympathy. Therefore no believer has cause to regret his temptations.

Rather, it is beautiful to see how, in God's discipline, they mellow the character, and draw out the latent forces. If the very name of wilderness associates itself with Satan, it is associated with Satan's downfall. If he is there, so is his Conqueror.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p 61.

THE baptism of Christ was the culminating point of the spiritual development of His inner life. It was a moment of ecstatic joy, of the highest consciousness of inspiration. We make a mistake, when we think that those forty days in the wilderness were all days of temptation and sorrow. They must have been, on the contrary, days, at first, of peaceful rest, of intense joy.

I. But now we meet the question: How did this become test—temptation? To understand this we must recall the two great ideas in His mind; the first that He was at one with the Father—that gave Him His perfect joy; the second that He was the destined Redeemer of the race, the Messiah long desired by men. (1) But—and here is the point at which suffering and test entered—these two voices directly contradicted one another. As soon as Christ turned to the world, with the greeting of His love, He heard coming from the world an answering greeting of welcome, but the ideas which lay beneath it were in radical opposition to His own. The vision of an omnipotent king, and an external kingdom, was presented to His spirit as the ideal of the Jewish people. It came rudely into contact with the vision in His own heart of a king made perfect by suffering, of a kingdom hidden at first, in the hearts of men. It is no difficulty to see the depth and manifoldness of the tests which arose from the clashing of these too opposed conceptions. (2) Christ's humanity was plunged into the deepest sorrow, engaged in the pain of a tremendous struggle against the evil conception formed by men of His mission and His work.

III. The temptation of Christ in the wilderness represents the great law of the history of man's nature—that every one of us must, in order to realize our true work and moral position in this world, meet and contend with the powers of evil. Christ is the King by victory of all the warrior-host of God. No truths can be dearer to a human heart than these two—the sympathy of the Son of man in temptation; the victory of humanity in the Son of man over evil.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, p. 251.

I. It was necessary that our Saviour should undergo this conflict, as a part of our redemption. But there can be no doubt that the temptation of our Lord occurred as it did, and has been related as it stands in Scripture, to serve as a model for us, who are still struggling with our subtle foe. And it is of the highest value to us, to trace His conduct under these solicitations, that we may make it our own also, to mark how He handles the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, that we may learn and practise its use for ourselves.

II. Consider the possibility of the temptation. Granted, we may suppose it said, that such a conflict with, and victory over, the tempter was necessary for our Lord; yet how could it in Him assume the form of temptation to sin? Was He not sinless? In answering this question, we must bear in mind, first, how entirely, in our Lord's case, all these solicitations were from without. No motions towards sin can spring up in a person who is sinless. The possibility of the temptation lay in this, that the tempter found in Jesus the same physical tendencies and the same desires which had in our case furnished the inlets to sin. On these he wrought. The enfeebled bodily frame of our Redeemer—the challenge to prove His Divine Sonship—the subtle use made of the fact that He came into the world to be a King—all these seemed to promise success, but all these were tried in vain; for the enemy had nothing in Him.

III. Consider the nature of the temptations. Though they are threefold, yet one ruling idea pervades them all, and it is this, the accomplishing the lawful ends of His mission by unlawful means. The whole was a subtly contrived and consistent endeavour to divert our Saviour from the spiritual course of becoming the Lord of the dead and living, into another and a carnal course; from that path which, steep as it was and unpromising, was the one chosen by Divine wisdom for the salvation of the world, into that which, however it might surely issue in discomfiture and the enemy's triumph, was yet for the present level and alluring. It was a bold and crafty attempt to set aside the true Messiahship of Jesus, and to substitute for it another false messiahship, which might be received by the Jews, and enjoy a short-lived popularity and a rapid access to fame.

H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 137.

No sooner had Jesus been baptized, while He was yet full of the Holy Ghost, than temptation came. Was that a fall? No, temptation is no fall: it is simply the mark of a true humanity;

it is the test which brings out what is highest in human nature; it is the measure and gauge of its noble qualities; you may call it the very mark in man of his diviner being.

I. Observe that temptation assailed Christ first on that very spiritual ground on which He stood. "If thou be the Son of God." Two snares beset Him on that ground; two subtle temptations, addressed, the one to the active, the other to the passive, side of His Divine relationship; the one to that sense of power which He derived from His entire union with and trust in God; the other to that very trust from which it sprang. The first was to put forth the miraculous power He possessed as the perfect Son of God, but so as to assert His independence of God, not His trust in Him. "Command that these stones be made bread."

II. We can understand that our Lord was left by the failure of the first assault upon Him in a very high state of blessedness and exaltation, more than conscious of God's favour and more than ever devoted to His will. Now, that very exaltation of spirit is to be turned into a snare. He had planted himself firmly upon the principle of self-renunciation and dependence upon God. Nothing was ever likely to shake Him from that ground. But might not His trust be corrupted into presumption, and His spirit of filial self-surrender into a fanatical throwing of Himself away? This I conceive to be the meaning of the second temptation. In Christ's view it was not all sacrifice that would be pleasing in God's sight, not every form of trust that would prove a childlike spirit, and give Him the title to be called the Son of God. Life was too holy, and God's providence was too holy, to be trifled with, even to produce a great impression.

III. In passing to the third temptation of Christ we are struck at once by the change of ground on which it rests, as compared with the two which preceded it. In both of these it was seen that there were spiritual grounds for the course suggested. The third temptation was a temptation to substitute the material for the spiritual world, to take this, and not the other, for the field of His ambition and the object of His work; to banish from His thoughts, as a mere day-dream, the idea of a God to work for in the world, a God who claimed men for His own, and whom it was His special mission to declare to them. And the bribe held out was worldly power. When the temptation comes to us, as it is sure to come, in one form or other, may we have grace to act upon the instinctive horror

which the first notion of it stirs, for the instinct is true that it is devil-worship; may we stand as Christ stood, and say, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

A. YOUNG, *Cambridge Review*, March 4th, 1885.

THE temptations of the devil were all skilfully directed to try the question whether Jesus was so thoroughly one with the Father as He professed to be, and as it was necessary that He should be; whether His Father's business really was the one interest of His heart and the great business of His life; whether His delight in doing God's will was so strong that it could not be overcome by any intense feeling; whether, under high pressure, some discord might not be revealed between Him and the Father.

I. Can He be tempted to use His power for any unwarrantable act of self-indulgence? He is faint and hungry through long fasting, and the craving for food is intense. Though He has no food in His hands, He has ample power of producing it. He has power to turn the very stones into bread. Why should He not use that power? In some way or other this thought is instilled by the devil into Jesus' mind. But Jesus intuitively apprehends that this course is not in accordance with the Father's will. The miraculous power which He has received is a for sign to the world, not a mere convenience to Himself; His miracles are to be symbols of men's deliverance from the thraldom of evil, not mere sources of ease or comfort to the worker. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

II. Baffled here, the tempter tries another device. He cannot tempt Jesus to any act of self-indulgence, but may He not tempt Him to an act of self-display? What if the crowd of worshippers were to see Him descending unhurt from the pinnacle of the Temple? Would not that give them a new sense of the honour in which they should hold Him, and gain for Him an attention not to be otherwise secured? It was a subtle temptation to put self in the centre. Such a course could not but be regarded by Jesus as showing a discord with the Father, as decided, though not as flagrant, as if He had directly disobeyed His will. It was a proposal He never could entertain. Never of His own accord would He plunge into danger to let the world see how God protected Him. He would do His work quietly and steadily, avoiding all display, neither seeking nor desiring the applause of men.

III. But even yet the tempter has not exhausted his wiles. He knows the greatness and the difficulty of the work which Jesus has undertaken; He knows that He has got the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Inch by inch the Messiah must push His conquests, encountering in each case the natural opposition of the heart, and from time to time the confederate forces of all His foes. Might not the desired result be reached in a shorter way? Satan offers to make over to Jesus his whole power and interest in the world on one small condition. Jesus must do obeisance to him as a sovereign transferring his rights; He must fall down and worship him. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." The immediate possession of the whole world is not for a moment to be dreamed of at the cost of even one act of disloyalty to God. Jesus would encounter ten thousand battles, would spend centuries in pain and disappointment, rather than so much as breathe a thought out of keeping with the claims of the great Lord of all.

W. G. BLAIKIE, *Glimpses of the Inner Life of our Lord*, p. 74.

THE Missionary Trials of the Church.

All who are earnestly striving for the spread of Christ's Kingdom on earth are exposed from the very earnestness of their seeking and striving to one great temptation, the one which really underlies all the three temptations of our Lord, and to which He was exposed all His life long—the temptation to promote His Kingdom by means which are not in agreement with that one fundamental law according to which alone it can truly develop itself. That law is the law of conquest by self-sacrifice.

I. First, there is the trial of the wilderness. The first temptation is a proposal to preserve the human life of Jesus by means of His Divine power; that is, to preserve it by violation of that law of His Kingdom which forbade Him thus to save Himself. Had He done thus He would have refused the Cross. "Man doth not live by bread alone." This is the martyr spirit of the Church. In this spirit the early Church conquered the world. Thus beneath this banner of the Cross her warriors went forth to victory, and it was not until the wilderness trial had ended that her missionary zeal abated, her first love grew cold, and she left the heathen half won, the uttermost parts of the earth unclaimed for her Lord.

II. Let us follow our Lord from the wilderness to the temple,

from lowliness to prominence, from weakness to power, from fear to security. As in the wilderness—the region of the natural—the temptation was mainly to the flesh, here in the region of the spiritual the temptation is altogether to the spirit: "Cast Thyself down, for angels shall bear Thee up."

The history of the second temptation is written at large in the history of the visible Church. The pinnacles of success, the high places of spiritual triumph, are giddy and slippery places. Ever as our Churches grow will grow their difficulties from these sources. False doctrines, heresies, schisms have yet to be encountered. The struggle of the earlier Church is for existence; as she grows, her trial is to order her life aright.

III. The tempter's offer in the third temptation was nothing less than the surrender to Christ of all the power he had possessed and all the glory he had usurped—the power to rule men, the glory of the empire over the beings whom God had made in His own image. It was this empire—not merely material but moral—over the kingdoms of men, that the tempter offered the Son of man.

And ever from that hour the tempter tries, by the same temptation, the souls of Christ's disciples. Truly it is possible for any of us to have some larger portion of the world if we will only pay the devil's price for it. And it would seem as if the temptation to compromise with the devil for the possession of God's world is the great temptation of Christian Churches and Christian nations in these latter days.

BISHOP MAGEE, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 57.

THE life of Jesus is the example of His people. What He did, we must do; what He suffered, we must suffer. As Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness of Judæa, to be tempted of the devil, so are we led by the same Spirit through the wilderness of this world, and all our life here is a tempted life.

I. It was after He had partaken of two great means of grace, Baptism and Fasting, that Jesus was tempted. Great spiritual blessings are often followed by very severe temptations.

II. The three kinds of temptation which were offered to our Lord correspond very closely with the enemies with whom we all have to fight; the flesh, the world, and the devil.

III. Try to encounter the devil's attack with the weapon of Holy Writ. There is written down what a Christian's duty is; hold fast to that.

IV. Do not willingly put yourselves in the way of temptation.

As says an old writer, "Do not shout in the ear of a sleeping temptation." When it is the Holy Spirit who leads us, however severe our trial may be, God will, with the temptation, provide a means for our escape.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 140.

I. ALL good men who had ever been in the world had believed that they were in some way or other united to One whom they could not see. They were good and right and true, so far as they trusted in Him, and guided their steps by the light He gave them. But every man knew that there was something in him which hindered him from exercising this trust, something which said, "Thou canst live without it." Each man was fighting with himself, fighting with his own evil inclinations; it seemed as if he had nothing to do with his neighbours; it seemed as if the desire to resist was one that no one else could possibly share in. Every one was alone in this war, and yet it was the common war, the war of all mankind.

II. What fight could our Lord have to fight, seeing that the very thing which all other men had been contending with in themselves was not in Him? Do you not see that He would be able to feel fully what each one had felt imperfectly, that He was fighting the *common* enemy—fighting an enemy who was entirely separate from Him, who was the most entirely unlike Him, and who, therefore, was assaulting Him more directly than he had ever assaulted any other being? He that was perfectly separate from sin would see down to the root of each particular sin, and would know that it was this which was seeking to destroy Him, and which He was come to destroy. His conflict, therefore, would be with the very spirit of selfishness, and division, and disobedience. This is the awful battle which you hear of in the Gospel of to-day.

III. Our Lord's fast was not to gain anything for Himself, but to maintain a glory which belonged to Him; to fit Him for engaging with His enemy; to fit Him for going about doing good. Even so must it be with His disciples. When they fast it must not be to obtain a privilege, but to realize one which God has freely bestowed on them; not to save themselves from temptation, but to *prepare* themselves for it; not to separate themselves from others, but to fit themselves better for helping others.

F. D. MAURICE, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 142.

REFERENCES: iv. i.—W. H. Hutchings, *Mystery of the Temptation*,

p 1; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 146; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 51; E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 200; C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 61; J. M. McCulloch, *Sermons*, p. 95; W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 344; H. Wonnacott, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 59; vol. xvi., p. 72; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 91; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 70; E. G. Charlesworth, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 46; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 20; H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 1. iv. 1, 2.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 391; H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 77.

### Chap. iv., vers. 1-4.

THE record of our Lord's temptation, which is specially commended to our consideration in Lent, must needs be momentous,—first, in its import for the comprehension of the spirit of His ministry, and secondly in its example to ourselves.

I. Consider especially the first temptation, to turn the stones into loaves of bread. This, as we are expressly told, was addressed to our Lord's sense of physical necessity and suffering, combined with His consciousness of the possession of miraculous power by which He might have relieved them. And in what did the evil of the suggestion consist? There were, it has been observed, other times in our Lord's life and ministry when He did not hesitate to have recourse to His miraculous powers, even for His own preservation, as when He passed through the hostile crowd at Nazareth; and there seems obviously nothing essentially wrong in the exercise of such powers. But our Lord's answer, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," points to the fact that the use of His miraculous power on this occasion would have been inconsistent with the express will and words of His Father. His endurance, for reasons beyond our full comprehension, had been imposed upon Him by the Spirit of God, and He would, therefore, have been acting in disobedience to an express direction of His Father if He had used the power with which He was endued to escape from the trial.

II. Now it would seem obvious that this is an example of the earliest and simplest—and yet, in some respects, the most persistent—temptation by which ordinary human beings are beset. The commonest temptations of life are aroused by physical cravings, together with the opportunity of gratifying those cravings in some manner which is contrary to the declared will and ordinance of God. Man's only safety lies in grasping

the principle which our Lord here asserted in answer to the tempter, that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." So far as it is necessary for him to live here, all natural provision that is essential for him will be made by his Father in Heaven. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto us.

H. WACE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 145.

REFERENCE: iv. 1-4.—C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., pp. 109, 177.

**Chap. iv., vers. 1-11.**

I. ONE cannot help thinking and wondering why this temptation should take place, and though all the reasons cannot be known, some of them we think we can see. We know there is a devil. Perhaps the most clever of all Satanic schemes is that in which he persuades men that he does not exist. What would suit a general better than to persuade the troops he is seeking to destroy that he is a mere creature of the imagination, that all the stories told about his being seen are mere inventions, and that, therefore, there is no need to take any precautions?

II. If Christ had not been tempted, we should have heard the old mocking laugh of Satan, as when God spoke of Job, "Thou hast set an hedge about him." If Satan had not been worsted in the struggle how cleverly would he have insinuated that the Saviour was not perfect. Satan cannot now say that Christ is untried.

III. Then, it has been proved that a man can resist sin in its strongest forms, for it was not as God that Jesus was tempted, but as the Son of man. It was the human nature that was tempted. Where would be the force of reasoning in Heb. iv. 13 if we are to believe that it was the Divine and not the human which fought and won the battle?

IV. As we read the story of the temptation, we cannot but be struck with the ignorance of Satan concerning Jesus. He did not understand Him. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the arch-enemy is not omniscient. He learns quickly, but there are many things he has yet to learn. Besides, he, like bad men, is ready to think that every one is as bad as himself. The fact is, Satan cannot appreciate goodness, and makes as many mistakes as ever.

V. Jesus has taught us the use of the Bible in self-defence. The Captain of our salvation girded Himself with the sword

of the Spirit. It is useless to expect to conquer without the heavenly brand. You will be mortally wounded if you are not able to parry the strokes of the enemy. Search out the meaning of God's word, and what you know, use. There was great vehemence in the words of Jesus. He was not content to parry the stroke; He cut with the edge of His blade. And the wounds He made have not healed to this day.

T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 55.

REFERENCES: iv. 1-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 57; vol. ii., p. 419; vol. viii., p. 68; T. Collins, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 248; R. C. Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 1; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 96; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., pp. 44, 161; A. Macleod, *Talking to the Children*, p. 21; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., pp. 99, 109; A. M. Fairbairn, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 321; J. J. Murphy, *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 312; G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 126. iv. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 44; W. H. Hutchings, *Mystery of the Temptation*, p. 32.

Chap. iv., vers. 2-4.—"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. . . . But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

OBSERVE—I. the depth of the intention of Satan's question. It opens at once a dilemma. Canst Thou be thus without bread, and yet be the Son of God? Nay, the thing is contradictory. "Give up the thought of Thy Sonship." Satan's great aim is to cut off the sense of sonship, for he knows well how the peace and the holiness of every man depend upon the feeling himself the child of God. Therefore, he does everything in the world to check that confidence in a man's soul.

II. What would have been the result if Christ had followed Satan's advice? It would have been (1) to do what Christ never did, to work a miracle for Himself, and exert His omnipotence only for His own gratification; (2) it would have been distrustful of the Divine providence, to go out of His way to obtain by the supernatural that which God could and did supply by natural means; and (3) it would have placed the material above the spiritual, the well-being of the body above the welfare of the soul.

III. Our Lord's answer takes us at once to this high thought, not only that God will provide—as He did by the manna—what is necessary for the body, but that He is the food for the soul; the food of truth—truth in Scripture, truth in Christ; a food

far more important than material bread; as much more important as spirit is more important, and if you fell, there was a point where you did *precipitate yourself.*

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, pp. 77, 85.

REFERENCES: iv. 2-4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 150: H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 13.

Chap. iv., ver. 3.—"And when the tempter came to Him, He said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

I. THE first recorded trial of our Saviour connects itself no doubt with His recent fast or extreme abstemiousness of forty days. He was afterwards an hungred. "If Thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, "command that these stones be made bread." "Devote," in other words, "the first exercise of those Divine gifts and miraculous powers, with which Thou art endowed, to the supply of the bodily and material necessities." Before expending this miraculous faculty in the most direct, and normal, and habitual service of the Heavenly Father, why not inaugurate its exercise by employing it for the first time in creating a treasure, easily convertible into bodily supplies, that can at all times be conveniently resorted to, and which shall place Himself and His indigent followers in a position independent of the sordid cares of life, and keep the Divine work from being checked or choked by the miserable anxieties of material existence?

II. And yet, if we may without irreverence for a moment imagine the Saviour to have listened to that suggestion, He would have deranged thereby the whole economy of the Kingdom of God. The power with which He was gifted, or which rather He brought with Him from the throne of God, was sufficient, and no more, for the purpose of effecting His sublime mission upon earth. In visiting this earth the Redeemer laid aside not only His Divine glory, but His Divine power also, except so much of it as was needed for effecting works of mercy upon other people. For Himself He never permitted the smallest employment of that mysterious faculty, for the supply of one fragment of bread, nor of one cup of water, nor for the assuagement of one throb of pain. To have placed Himself in a position of superhuman security against the wants and infirmities of human nature; to have reserved for His own personal behoof a fund from which every want could be easily

supplied, would have been to place Himself outside the circle of humanity. It would have been to defeat, to neutralize, to cancel that profound and that sublime self-sacrifice which constitutes the essence and heart of Christianity.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 252.

SPIRITUAL Temptations.

I. The danger of spiritual temptations is that they do not look like temptations. They do not look ugly, absurd, wrong. They look pleasant, reasonable, right. The devil, says the Apostle, transforms himself into an angel of light. If so, then he is certainly far more dangerous than if he came as an angel of darkness and horror. Our worst temptations sometimes look so exactly like what is good, and noble, and useful, and religious, that we mistake the evil for the good, and play with it till it stings us, and we find out too late that the wages of sin is death.

II. How shall we get to know these temptations? The root of them all is pride and self-conceit. Whatsoever thoughts or feelings tempt us to pride and self-conceit are of the devil, not of God. The spirit of pride cannot understand the beauty of humility, and the spirit of self-will cannot understand the beauty of obedience; and, therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that the devil could not understand our Lord. The temptations were clearly meant to tempt our Lord to pride. Whenever we, in like manner, are tempted to do or say anything rash, or vain, or mean, because we are the children of God; whenever we are inclined to be puffed up with spiritual pride, to fancy that we may take liberties which other men must not take, because we are the children of God, let us remember the words of the text, and answer the tempter, when he says, "If Thou be the son of God, do this and that," as our Lord answered him. If I be the child of God I must behave as if God were my Father. I must trust my God utterly, and I must obey Him utterly. I must do no rash or vain thing to tempt God, even though it looks as if I should have a great success and do much good thereby. I must worship my Father in heaven, and Him only must I serve. My business is to do the little, simple, every-day duties which lie nearest me; and then, if Christ will, He may make me ruler over many things, and I shall enter into the joy of my Lord, which is the joy of doing good to my fellow-men.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 65.

I. WHERE was the evil of the thoughts which the tempter placed before Jesus? And why would our Lord (if He had given heed

to them) have yielded to that spirit which He came to conquer? (1) "If Thou be the Son of God." It is not, then, certain that He is the Son of God. That voice from heaven, the seal of His baptism, the descent of the Spirit, were not sufficient to prove Him so. He must get some other evidence of it than this. You see here is distrust. But what is the life of the Son of God? It is the life of faith, the life of trust. In the act of proving Himself to be the Son of God He would have renounced the name. (2 "If Thou be the Son of God *command*." He was to use His power, and He was to show Himself a son, by showing what He was able to do. But the life of the Son of God was the life of obedience. (3) "Command that these stones be made *bread*." Here was an exhortation to do something for Himself, to use the power wherewith He had created the world for the satisfaction of His own wants. But the power of God, the power which goes forth from the Father and the Son, the power which breathed life into all things, is the power of love, the power of diffusing blessedness. If our Lord had used His creating power for Himself, He would have been giving up this life of love which He had as the Son of God.

II. The answer. Our Lord would not separate Himself from the creatures which He had formed, He would speak as if He were one of them. His answer was as much as saying, "My glory, as the Son of God, shall consist not in the power that I use over these stones to make them bread, but in the power that I have received to go through whatever my people have gone through in all past time, so that men of every age shall own in Me one who has perfectly entered into their feelings and undergone their trials, and has cheerfully endured whatever My Father has been pleased to lay upon them."

III. If by this answer our Lord made Himself one with us in our humiliation, and claimed for us the privilege of being one with Him in His blessedness, He also teaches that we are partakers in His temptation.

F. D. MAURICE, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 154.

REFERENCES: iv. 3.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 9; M. H. Hutchings, *Mystery of the Temptation*, p. 69. iv. 3, 4.—*Ibid.*, p. 104.

Chap. iv., ver. 4.—"Man shall not live by bread alone."

I. GOD has appointed, under all ordinary circumstances, that we should sustain life by the secondary means of earthly food; but where He has placed man under special bonds of duty, and

pointed out before him a course of action higher and nobler than the mere sustaining of the body, He can and will nourish him in this course of duty; or even if it should in its fulfilment wear out and bring to dissolution this physical frame, He can and will provide for that man's true life in a better and more exalted sense. His real life, his real sustenance, is not to be found in bread alone, but in God's appointment, God's service, that which cometh out of the mouth of God. What a noble example have we of such a spirit in our blessed Lord! He came into the world to serve the Father, with a definite path of duty marked out before Him. Though He was the Son of God, He submitted Himself to hunger and pain, to tears and sorrow, to insult and rejection, rather than for one instant transgress the limits which He had marked out for Himself. He lacked the bread of the world, but it was that He might feed the world with the bread of life. He was deprived of the comforts of this world, but it was that He might be the Everlasting Comforter of this world's mourners. By His rejection of all unworthy and secondary means of attaining His end, and following simply His Father's will, He showed us that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

II. The tempter comes to each of us, and tries to make us swerve from our true work into selfish and worldly courses. We have not, it is true, supernatural power to abuse, but we have each of us talents, faculties, worldly means, to be laid out on this our work. And the temptation comes to us in this form: Take thy talents, take thy faculties, take thy worldly means, lay them out for thyself. These are our temptations, and it is for us to remember that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 152.

I. SINCE man has a complex nature, his life must inevitably be a failure in so far as he neglects to bring that nature in its entirety to the greatest possible perfection. For this it is necessary that the lower principles be guided and controlled by the higher. Neither the narrow desires of sense, nor the wider and more comprehensive desires, such as love of wealth and power, are to be eradicated; but their original character of independence is to be changed. Complete self-development requires that we regard our nature as a whole—estimating at their proper value all its various elements, and using them

according to their respective characters of subordination and supremacy.

II. But further, complete self-development requires that we remember the next life as well as the present. It is imperative on us all to remember that the "grave is not our goal," and that our life on earth is but an elementary stage in our existence. Though there is not required from us any irrational rejection of pleasure, there is required from us the reasoning and reasonable rejection of it where it would be incompatible with our complete all-round development. Though there is not required from us any hypocritical profession of contempt for the world in which we live, there is required from us serious reflection upon the fact that we carry latent within us "the power of an endless life." Though we should not ignore, nor attempt to destroy, the lower elements of our nature, we should—and, if we would be perfect, we *must*—subdue them, and press them into the service of the Spirit.

A. W. MOMERIE, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 135.

THIS text offers an answer to the question, How shall we live? It strikes out in a sentence a theory of living. Satan, as the prince of this world, announces his theory, and tries to win Christ's assent to it: "Man lives by bread and by bread alone." Christ replies, "Man lives not by bread, but by God. Man lives by God's gifts, only as God is behind them. Man's real support is not in the gifts, but in the Giver."

I. What is covered by this word "bread"? It covers the whole visible economy of life, all that range of supplies, helps and supports upon which men usually depend to keep themselves alive and to make life comfortable and enjoyable. The world's commonly accepted theory is, "By these things we live. We cannot get on without them." Now I am not blind to men's natural and pardonable anxiety about such things. Food and garment and home are parts of God's own economy of life in this world; and Christ Himself says, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." The Kingdom of God *includes* bread; and hence, in the Lord's Prayer, immediately after the petition, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done," comes the prayer for daily bread.

II. If our Lord had yielded to this first temptation, He would have committed Himself to the bread theory as the law of His Kingdom, no less than of His own life. He would have said, by changing the stones into bread, "As I cannot live without

bread, so My Kingdom cannot thrive so long as men's worldly needs are unsupplied. My administration must be a turning of stones into bread. We know that this has not been Christ's policy. He abjured it in this answer to Satan. This is what Christ asserts, that society no less than man as an individual *truly* lives only as it lives by dependence on God. Social prosperity is based on righteousness. Man lives by God's gifts, but not by the gifts only—by bread, but not by bread *alone*. Bread is nothing without God. Bread gets all its power to feed from God. Bread points away from itself to God. Bread has a part in the Divine economy of society, but it comes in with the Kingdom of God, under its law and not as its substitute.

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 3.

THE Food of Man.

I. Consider what it is for which consciousness and the best experience of our race unite in saying that the immediate advantage and pleasure of the senses must be surrendered. Jesus described it to His tempter as "the word of God." And the word of God includes two notions—one of revelation and one of commandment. Whenever God speaks by any of His voices it is first to tell us some truth which we did not know before, and second to bid us do something which we have not been doing. Every word of God includes these two. Truth and duty are always wedded. There is no truth which has not its corresponding duty. And there is no duty which has not its corresponding truth. He, then, who lives by the word of God is a man who is continually seeing new truth and accepting the duties that arise out of it. And it is for this, the pleasure of seeing truth and doing its attendant duty, that he is willing to give up the pleasures of sense, and even, if need be, to give up the bodily life to which the pleasures of sense belong.

II. In consciousness and in experience man finds the witness of his higher nature. But consciousness and experience both of them are weak in all of us. Here is where the revelation of Christ comes in. Christ is both the Revealer of a man's life to himself and the Revealer of the world's life to all of us. It is when Christ is in you that the highest motives become practically powerful upon your life. We think of Christ as the Liberator. But we do need to know what the character of the liberation which He brings us is. He wants to awaken your dead conscience, and to quicken into life and aspiration the apparently

dead and depressing experience around you, so that you shall feel in yourself the response to higher motives, and recognize in all history the loftier and more spiritual possibility of man. That is true liberty. It does not cast the lower things away. Man shall live by bread, but not by bread alone. The things that supplied the lower wants are not thrown away, but they are used no longer to enslave and bind, but simply to sustain and steady, the life which moves now under spiritual impulse.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons*, p. 265.

REFERENCES: iv. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1208; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 259; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 27; C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 261.

Chap. iv., vers. 5, 6.

I. OUR Lord was carried from the wilderness to the holy city. Understand by this how all our circumstances in the world may be changed, and yet the tempter be with us still. Hundreds of men have gone out into the desert thinking that in that way they should escape temptation, but it has found them out. The spirit of evil has shown them that they do not escape from him by escaping from men. Then they have run back into the holy city; they have thought that they were exposed to danger because they were away from the ordinances of God. But there, too, they have found there was no security; it has only been a change from "Command these stones to be made bread," into "Cast thyself down from hence."

II. Consider what was the particular temptation of our Lord when He was brought into the holy city. I have no doubt that when our Lord was reflecting on the iniquities of the holy city, the devil suggested to Him the thought, "What avails it to be a Jew, to be a citizen of God's city, a member of the holy nation, when holiness and purity and unity have utterly deserted it? If Thou be the Son of God set an example of throwing away these vain privileges." Precisely this temptation is presented to all of us this day.

III. Understand next from this history of our Lord's second temptation that we are not to plead love to our brethren as any excuse for going out of God's way or doing work which He has not set us to do. Our Lord was urged to cast Himself down from the Temple, that He might convince the Jews of their unbelief. He who urged Him to it wished Him in that very thing to commit an act of unbelief. Thousands of such acts have been committed by men who thought that they were

honouring God and helping their brethren. They were doing neither. To be working together with God is our highest honour. When we are not doing this we cannot be working any good to ourselves or to any other man.

F. D. MAURICE, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 171.

Chap. iv., vers. 5-7.—"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down," etc.

I. IT was a master-piece of Satan to take Christ to the Temple. There was the spot which God loved best in the whole earth, that He had fenced around with most special and jealous care. It had been the scene of the most glorious manifestation of Jehovah. And because of all this Satan bore our Saviour thither. What spot so proud, of earth, on which to rear his trophy?

II. The object of the second temptation was a proud and ambitious display of supernatural power. It was an act of self-aggrandisement, done in a false confidence, for an apparent good; and the word which would sum up the whole would be presumption. Presumption is the expectation of an end without the means, an ungrounded hope of a Divine interposition, an abuse of a privilege, a departure from a general law for a selfish end.

III. In quoting a verse from Psalm xci. Satan does as he is ever wont—he destroys the force of the promise by making it vague. And where there is no accuracy there never is power. He omitted the four words "*in all thy ways.*" The promise is only to *thy way*.

IV. It is evident that the tempter had no power to cast Christ down from the Temple, or to force Him to take the flight; but he plies his argument, and then he says, "Cast Thyself down." There is no sin which is not voluntary. Those points—where the power to do, or the power to forbear, still lives—are sometimes very small. But they are the crises of every man's moral history.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 69.

REFERENCES: iv. 5-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 689; W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 377; F. W. Farrar, *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 296; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 151; H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 25; W. H. Hutchings, *Mystery of the Temptation*, p. 141. iv. 6.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 361; T. Birkett Dover, *Lent Manual*, p. 31.

**Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."**

I. In this temptation, as in the last, our Lord's situation is ours. Placed here to do God's work, we are assured, while in that work, of His gracious protection. No danger can assail the servant of God of which he need be afraid. His bodily frame is in the gracious charge of His Heavenly Father, and much more his spirit—that for which and by which his flesh lives, and from which it derives its aim and its dignity. Let the servant of God be found in His ways, and his ultimate safety is assured.

II. But as in our Master's case, so in ours, it is even on this safety that the tempter founds his attack. His aim ever is, to turn the Christian's security into a carnal security; to deprive it of its right character—a holding on by faith to the everlasting strength of God—and turn it into presumption, into a dependence upon God's protection without His warrant, to persuade us to cast ourselves into danger, relying on that help which, out of God's course, we have no reason to expect.

III. Do Christians never thrust themselves into spiritual danger, presuming on the Divine help? What are, for example, all their very near approaches to sin, as they suppose with a safe conscience? What is it but tempting God—to be bound under a vow to renounce the world and the flesh, and then to lead a life of entire dedication to the world and indulgence of the flesh? What is it but tempting Him to be going carelessly on as if life were nothing but a spending of so much time, as if hours and days and years were not speeding away to their account, with all their mercies and opportunities and judgments recorded against us, if not for us? He who walks not circumspectly is tempting God, casting himself on the ocean of life without chart or compass, and looking to Him who has provided both for his use, to bring him safe to heaven without them.

H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 168.

The Inductive Study of the Scriptures.

I. In prosecuting a systematic and inductive examination of the Scriptures, there are three things in reference to which we must always be on our guard. (1) We must see that all the passages brought together for the purpose have a real bearing on the subject in hand. (2) We must see to it that we give to each passage its own legitimate weight—no more, no less. (3) We must see to it that our induction of passages is complete.

II. Look at a few subjects in the consideration of which the

importance of the application of these principles will be seen. (1) The doctrine of the Trinity. While there are many passages in both the Old Testament and the New which give the strongest emphasis to the unity of God, "It is written again," and frequently, that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; while in such formulæ as that of baptism and that of the apostolic benediction, each is so named as to indicate that there is in each something that is unique and distinctive; I dare not reject either side of the apparent inconsistency without failing to take note of some of the Bible statements on the subject; and if I do that I am guilty of setting myself above revelation, and making my reason, not Scripture, the infallible standard of my faith. (2) The same principles may be applied as regards the doctrine of the Person of Christ, of the Atonement, of the difficult questions which cluster about the sovereignty of God and the free agency of man and of prayer.

III. Note three important inferences. (1) Every heresy has in it a certain modicum of truth. (2) The truth thus mixed up with error is very generally something that has been too much overlooked. That which has been neglected revenges itself at length by claiming more than its due share of importance. (3) Error is to be most effectually met by recognizing the portion of truth which it contains. Bring that back to its proper importance, then supplement it by putting it along with those other sides of the truth which are needed to give it full-balanced completeness. Let it be acknowledged fully and frankly "it is written;" but then let it be added, "it is written again."

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds and Other Sermons*, p. 260.

**Chap. iv., vers. 8, 9.**

I. THE root of the third temptation lay in the thought that the kingdoms of the world were the devil's kingdoms, and that it was he who could dispose of them. If our Lord had believed this, if He had acknowledged this claim, He would have been falling down and worshipping the evil spirit, He would have been confessing him to be the Lord. But for all that He beheld the horrible vision of human misery and human crime; for all that He found men actually doing homage to the spirit of evil, actually serving him with their thoughts, and words, and deeds; in spite of all this, He believed and knew that these kingdoms were not the devil's kingdoms, but God's kingdoms. He knew

that men's sins began in this, consisted in this, that they thought and believed the devil to be their king, when God was their King.

II. It is a hard thing to believe this, when there are so many things that seem to contradict it, but believe it we must, if we would be honest men. Holy men have been betrayed into sins which make one weep and blush when one reads the history of Christ's Church, because they have thought that falsehood and evil were the lords of the world, and that if they were to overcome the world they must do it by entering into some bargain or compromise with these masters of it. The devil was saying to them, "These are mine, and I give them to whomsoever I will." They believed him. He asked this token of homage from them, and they paid it. The mischiefs that have followed from every such faithless act have been more than I can tell you, and though they are no warrant to us in condemning others, they are most terrible warnings to ourselves. Such temptations can only be resisted, as the enemies of saints and martyrs were resisted, by the might of Him who said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

F. D. MAURICE, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 185.

TRUE and False Ascensions.

It would have been an ascension if our Lord, on that exceeding high mountain, had taken, at Satan's hand, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. For to take the same kingdom and the same glory Christ did actually ascend from the Mount of Olives. The difference was not very great in the fact of the refused and the accepted ascension. Consider in what consists the difference between the two.

I. Wherein would have lain the sinfulness of the act, if Christ had complied with Satan's desire? (1) In the first place, He would have made that His own act which was not to be His own act, but the Father's through the Son. (2) He would have accepted good at the hands of the enemy of good. (3) He would have done for His own sake, without further reference, what He was to do for the Church's sake. (4) It would have been premature, a beginning which ought to be an ending. (5) He would have assumed an end without going through the means. (6) He would have been elevated by a guilty compact; there would have been the sacrifice of a principle, a present evil committed to arrive at an ultimate good. (7) The honour would have gone in the wrong direction; it

would have been to His own glory and Satan's glory, but not to the glory of the Father.

II. To ascend, that is, to get higher and higher, to possess more, to be capable of more, to have more honour and greater power, is an impulse of our nature. Every Christian, like his Master, is born to an ascension. Therefore, because it is right, it is certain that it may be a matter of great temptation to do it in a wrong way, or at a wrong time, or with a wrong motive, or by wrong means. Look well to it how you go up any height, what road, at what time, by whose bidding, for whose glory. It will be a sad thing if the bad, early fiction rob you of the grand reality of the close. There is a grand ascension coming, but now our path lies with our Master, through the plains of Galilee, the valleys of Hinnom, to the garden of Gethsemane. We have to work, and we have to bear. We must go through the last penalty of sin, and glorify God in our dying. For that road down to those "lowest parts of the earth" is the path, the only path, that leads up to the everlasting hills.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 227.

REFERENCES: iv. 8, 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 153; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 294.

Chap. iv., vers. 8-10.—"Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me," etc.

I. There is no falsehood on the face of the earth so dangerous as truth—when that truth comes distorted, placed in wrong order, or laid in false proportions. This was exactly the character of the last temptation. All the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them, were Christ's; and He was even at that moment at the commencement of the path by which He was going to take possession of them. But to that kingdom there was an appointed time, a prescribed way, and covenanted conditions. And could the time, or the way, or the conditions be violated, even by a shade, the character and the very existence of that kingdom would have been nullified and destroyed.

II. In the journey to heaven, beware of taking the line which seems often the shortest. Whatever bright things are before you, and however near they look, depend upon it you have to go lower before you can go higher. A heaven we could go to at once would not be half as pleasant as the heaven we wait, and strive, and suffer for. And a heaven which we

could purchase by our own good works would be as nothing compared to the heaven which we shall owe all to the blood of Jesus Christ.

III. Observe our Lord's mode of dealing with the suggestion which would do an evil that a good might come. He lays down one great fixed principle: "God, only God, must be worshipped." Whatever trespasses on His solitary majesty, whatever detracts in one iota from Him—that must never be. Therefore, you are to take this general law: There is something better than the kingdom, and higher than happiness; higher than the highest—it is the glory of God. Admit of no possession, no joy, no privilege, no honour, temporal or spiritual, which does not, in some way or other, glorify God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 100.

REFERENCES: iv. 8-10.—W. H. Hutchings, *Mystery of the Temptation*, p. 182; W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 392. iv. 8-11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 152. iv. 8-22.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. v., p. 152. iv. 8-22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 507. iv. 9.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 135; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 249; F. W. Aveling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 20; G. Calthrop, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 177.

Chap. iv., ver. 10.—"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

IT was by this time evident that our blessed Lord was not to be tempted to either distrust or presumption. But what if He were once more tried, with a temptation which should coincide with the direction of that path itself? How if He could be induced, in the fulfilment of His mission on earth, to take a shorter and less toilsome way than that on which He appeared to be entering?

I. Desperation made the tempter bold. He dares to aim at winning the Prince of the Kingdom of Light to be a vassal of the kingdom of darkness. Strange as are the promise and the assertion, still stranger is the condition annexed, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Here spoke the true character of him who fell through pride, and through exalting himself against the Most High. Satan stands forth impiously exulting in his name as God's adversary, and vaunting his rebellion against Him. No longer, therefore, does Jesus condescend to answer the fool according to his folly, or condescend to deal with his offer or his assertions, but

meets him with, "Get thee hence, Satan." Yet not relinquishing even now the sword of the Spirit, He adds for our profit and to complete His testimony to His own position as the Son of man, placed under obedience to the Father, "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

II. There are many blessings, many advantages even of a temporal kind, within our reach and forming legitimate objects of our desire. But such things are often offered us from objectionable quarters and on objectionable conditions. In such cases the Christian's duty is plain. First, he must never be so carried away with the pursuit of the world's advantages as that his better reason should be overcome; but he must be watchful and temperate in all his desires, knowing that this is not his rest, but that he looks for another country, even a heavenly. This being secured, he must, in the temperate and lawful pursuit of worldly advantage, take heed that he receive nothing on conditions which touch his allegiance to his heavenly Father.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 184.

CULTURE and Temptation.

I. Education—meaning by that the putting into the hands of any being, or class, a power, a knowledge, before unattained—can have no force to abolish temptation or to diminish its strength. All it can do is to remove the recipient from one stratum of temptation to another. Temptation is inducement to sin; and sin is not vice. Sin is the failure to do our duty, whatever that duty be, to God. Cultivation creates new responsibilities; and, therefore, while it lessens the hold of certain temptations, continually brings us into the presence of new ones. Culture brings its own temptations; shows new paths by which to "crawl away from heaven," as well as new avenues to that kingdom. Education is worthless as a moral discipline, till it has developed in the ripening intellect the conviction that in the worship of God—that is not the lip-service of religious ceremonial, but the devotion to His glory and kingdom—is its reasonable service, its privilege not less than its bounden duty, the only true fulfilment of its God-given purpose. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

II. As our Lord's life is the pattern of every life, so is His temptation the type of every temptation presented to every man born into this world. He (I use the phrase with all reverence,

deliberately) was a man of culture. "And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions; and all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Such a being was He on whom the tempter had to exercise His influence. "Fall down and worship me," he said, "and everything shall be yours." The reply which the Saviour made is still the only safe, the only complete and all-embracing, reply. The kingdoms of the earth are good, but for a soul, which came from God and returns to Him there is but one living, lasting satisfaction, and that is the kingdom of heaven. The end of all education, the end of all religion, is the bringing of a soul into harmony with perfect righteousness.

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 225.

**Chap. iv., ver. 11.—"Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."**

THE final repulse of the tempter was accompanied by a command, "Get thee hence, Satan." And we may well conceive that this command was to the enemy a word of power, which he might not disobey. He who henceforth cast out the evil spirits with a word here proved His authority on their chief. And now His present conflict is over. He stands victorious, while the tempter has fallen. He, the Second Adam, has brought in and secured righteousness for us. Let us endeavour to gather up the general instruction to be gained from the history of the temptation.

I. He has, by His example under temptation, taught us how to resist it. Our weakness is, when any unlawful course is proposed to us, to be ever on the search for separate excuses to shield us in each case. He shrunk from applying general principles which may cover every attack. We are ashamed too often to stand at once in God's ways and refer to His will. Here we have an eminent example in our blessed Lord. He did not enter into the separate circumstances of each form of temptation, but applied to them all, as His means of resistance, His position as the servant of God, subject to His law, and from it taking the maxims of His conduct.

II. His example shows us the proper use of God's word. Let our Lord's example keep us from rash or random application of Scripture texts. With what precision is each brought forward by Him. We must study the Bible, and we must study it devotionally, not as a mere intellectual exercise, but

to ascertain the mind of the Spirit of God—a search which requires spiritual discernment, the fruit of a communion with Him in singleness of heart and a holy life.

III. But unquestionably the greatest lesson for the disciple of Jesus to learn, from the temptation of his Master, is one of encouragement, tending to draw him closer to Christ, and to make Him more precious. When One is set before us as our ever-present Helper, who Himself has passed through the struggle; when we know that we are not alone in the bitterness of our spirits, and that in the darkest place in our course we shall find His footsteps; what a different matter does each Christian's appointed conflict become—how full of sympathy, how full of promise, how full of Christ!

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 201.

REFERENCES: iv. 11.—W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 49; W. H. Hutchings, *Mystery of the Temptation*, p. 230. iv. 12.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 310. iv. 12-17.—*Ibid.*, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 129. iv. 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 28. iv. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1,010. iv. 16.—D. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii. 114.

Chap. iv., ver. 17.—**"Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent."**

THE text invites us to look at two things:—

I. The Preacher. "Jesus began to preach." Jesus was the Son of man and the Son of God. Who, then, can equal Him in sympathy and in wisdom? It should be understood that very much depends upon the preacher as well as upon the doctrine preached. (1) There was more human nature in Jesus Christ than was ever in any other man. He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin—without that one defilement which impairs and ruins the finest qualities of human nature. Preachers must be intensely human if they would reach with good effect the hearts of men. (2) There was more intellectual ability and spiritual insight in Jesus Christ than ever distinguished any other preacher. Look at the answers which He gave to cavillers. Look at the keenness of His discrimination as to moral differences—hypocrisy, falseness, half-heartedness. Look at His love of truth—simple, pure, eternal truth.

II. The Subject of His Preaching. That subject was repentance. Hear this marvellous Preacher—Repent! That is one of the most solemnly suggestive words in all human language. (1) Repent—then men are in a wrong moral

condition. But for this Jesus would never have come. (2) Repent—then there is a work which men must do themselves. One man cannot repent for another. See the power and the weakness of human nature in this particular. One man can suffer for another; can pay for another; can work for another; can even die for another, but never can one man repent for another. (3) Repent, then, until this special work is done; everything else that is seemingly good is worthless. If Jesus preached repentance, then (*a*) all true preachers will do the same; (*b*) it is certain that repentance is vitally necessary for all mankind; (*c*) if repentance is the first act needed, it is vicious and absurd to attempt to make religious progress without it.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 116.

THE Privilege of Repentance.

I. There are two different words used in the New Testament, both of which are translated into the English word Repentance; one of them conveys especially the notion of being sorry for having done wrong; the other conveys specially the notion of changing one's mind as to things,—seeing things in a different light, and then shaping one's conduct accordingly,—trying to mend one's life. It is this second word which Christ used; which you can see is the fuller and larger word, including substantially the meaning of the first word too; taking in the being sorry for the wrong-doing and ashamed of it; coming to right views, beginning afresh, and trying to do better.

II. The religion Christ taught was the first which offered forgiveness without suffering, on the part of the penitent, or inflicted by the penitent. All the suffering was borne, long ago, and once for all, that brought our salvation. And now, "if we confess our sins"—that is all—God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Christ's preaching starts from a fact; the fact that there is something wrong; the fact that men are sinners. Now repentance is just the right and healthy feeling of the awakened soul that sees its own sin. Once a man is made to see he is a sinner, then, if his mind be in any way healthy and true, the state of feeling which arises in it is what we call Repentance.

III. Is it not strange that repentance should be so commonly thought a painful duty? It is a grand and inexpressible privilege. There is nothing degrading in it; the degradation is all in the state it takes us out of. It is degrading to stay in sin, not to get out of it. And there is no humiliation, beyond the fact that

it is a humble thing to be a human being, in confessing that we have been wrong. That Christ's Gospel invites us to repentance just means that man is not tied down to go on in his wrong and misery. It means that he has not got into that miserable lane in which there is no turning.

A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 32.

REFERENCES: iv. 17.—J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 87; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 329; H. W Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 209. iv. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 276. iv. 18, 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 702. iv. 18-20.—H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit*, p. 469.

**Chap. iv., vers. 18-22.**

JESUS and the Fishermen.

Observe here—I. Jesus called the Galilean fishermen. There was nothing novel in the calling of men from a lowly condition to the performance of a high and holy task. The men who were to stand at the head of this great movement were men of the people, men who had not enjoyed any special privileges. It ought to be enough to establish the certainty of the heavenliness of Christ's Kingdom, that He used no artificial means in laying its foundations so firmly in the consciousness of the world, and that this was done through the instrumentality of fishermen, and that He appealed to them as He does to all, to the willing mind and the responsive conscience, and did this through furnishing them with a new and holy ideal of human life.

II. He called them for a specific purpose. "I will make you fishers of men." Thus He spake to them in familiar words; but familiar words when used by Him were charged with unfamiliar meaning; they contained the revelation of God's heart and of man's destiny. He who knew as no man knew enlisted the ordinary in the service of the extraordinary, and without injury to His theme translated the spiritual into the terms of the material. Christ promised that His disciples should catch. "I will make you fishers of men." They would have to vary their manner of using the net He furnished them with; they would not catch as many as they desired, but would at length succeed, because the net was the right kind of net, and they themselves would be prepared for its use.

III. How they were to be fitted for this work: "Follow Me." They were to wait on Him, to go in and out with Him from the beginning, to apprehend the meaning of His words and the spirit in which they were conceived. They must know Him;

this was their first, their great, business in life. He taught His doctrine in the practice of it, and the practice of it in the patience and heroism of His own life. They were to know all they needed to know, be all they ought to be, and do all required of them to be done, by following Him.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 3.

REFERENCES: iv. 18-22.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 17; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 283; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons* (1870), p. 311. iv. 18-25.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 139.

**Chap. iv., ver. 19.—"And Jesus saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

CHRIST'S Training of the Ministers of the Word.

I. Who are they that are chosen by our Lord to receive the signal benefit of training in His school? Not one of the twelve is a priest or a priest's son. There is not a man with Pharisaic relationship among them. They were all "provincials" of a very decided type, plainly as strange to the springs of metropolitan power and habit as though they had never been to the chief city of the people. In the possession of faith and hope and love they were all alike—and in nothing else. Christ did not, never does, call duplicates, but men, individuals, having an absolutely original "make," bent, bias, or personal force in them.

II. Note the means adopted by our Lord in equipping the Apostles for His service: (1) A constant and habitual companionship with Himself; (2) the Gospel accounts fully demonstrate that unselfish and helpful work for men formed a most essential factor in the education of the first disciples for the duties of the apostolate; (3) a third potent agent in the upbuilding of the character of these first Gospel fishermen is disclosed in the sharp sorrows, sudden shocks, and painful and repeated sufferings they encountered in the way of their useful and helping work for men; (4) these men were fitted for their work by their deepening experience of the power and riches of the life of Christ.

III. And for what is all this prolonged and varied discipline? What is the Teacher's aim? Clearly, concisely, and comprehensively is it stated in this guiding word of the Preacher. It is to *catch men*. The aim is directly at *men*. Man fills the whole vision; the steadfast gaze is on him, the anxious work is for him, the lengthened discipline is for him. As Jesus came to

save men, so His servants are sent out on precisely the same errand. He lives for men. We have to do the same. It is each man for Christ, and the whole of each man for Christ. That is the aim of every minister who knows what He has to do, as it is the well-defined purpose of Christ in calling him and training him for the ministry.

J. CLIFFORD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 257.

CHRIST'S call to us is essentially that which He addressed to these first disciples.

I. What was His call to them? It was this—they were to leave their work that they might engage in a higher work. The secular was to be exchanged for the spiritual. They were fishers. Henceforth, they were to be something more than fishers. They were to become fishers of men. And that, I say, is the call He addresses to us.

II. "How is that so?" you may ask. "Are we all to abandon the work which we are doing? Is the child at school to leave his books, and the clerk his desk, and the workman his tools, and the painter his brushes and easel? and are we all to become preachers or missionaries?" Of course that would be impossible. We should not be too quick to conclude that because we do not like the drudgery of our secular work, or meet with indifferent success in it, we are therefore designed for something higher and more sacred. Other things being equal, it is more likely that Christ will call to His side those who have prospered in their worldly undertakings, than those who have not prospered. Do not suppose that it was because Peter's heart was not in his work, or because he was clumsy with his net, that he was called to be one of the twelve. In the Kingdom there is need for the capable men, as well as room for the feeble and the incompetent. The summons to all men is not to forsake altogether their secular work. In what sense, then, is their work to be given up and exchanged for a higher work? In this sense, that it is no longer to be the end of their life, the final object of ambition and endeavour. What was an end becomes, in the case of those who hear the call of Christ, no more an end, but a means.

III. "Fishers of men"—that is what we must be if our Master's ends are to be ours. For this is what He was—a Fisher of men. And His disciples are to follow Him, and they are to follow Him not merely that they may be safe under His protection, or that they may be happy in His companionship and

sympathy, but that they may share in His work, that they may make His holy mission their own. And how shall we hope to be successful in it? Note these two conditions—which, really, are one: (1) We must follow Christ, and (2) we must submit to His teaching and influence.

ARNOLD THOMAS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 8.

REFERENCES: iv. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,906; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 12; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 240; vol. vii., p. 279; H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 17; D. B. Hooke, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 261; J. de Kewer Williams, *Ibid.*, p. 132; J. H. Shakespeare, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 278; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,673.

Chap. iv., vers. 19, 20.—"And He saith unto them, Follow Me. . . . And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him."

THE Attractive Force of Jesus.

I. The Lord had but one method with all classes. He could only bless the rich by making them feel that a man's heart was beating, and a man's needs were crying to God, under their purple. And He had no other means of blessing the poor. It was the common humanity that He touched and drew after Him by the magnet of His attraction, and, as He drew it, the class vestments and badges were dropped and left behind in the way.

II. In lower human forms this magnetic attraction of man on man is not unknown. It is the orator's power. It constitutes, in a still higher form, the great captain's power. This power, which under the highest conditions man exercises within limits over his fellows, the Lord exercises absolutely and royally over mankind. For He is the King of men—their natural, heaven-born King. Deep down in every man's nature there is that which has an eye and an ear for His Kingship; a sense of His Royal authority and right with which, when it is once awakened, nothing in this wide universe can compete. A glance, a word, as the Lord passed by, a transient gleam from that fountain of attractive force, and merchants left their gains, workmen left their tools, fishers left their nets, scholars left their lore, leaders left their thrones, and cast no longing, lingering look behind them, as they pressed on in the footsteps of the poor, weary, helpless, excommunicated Christ. "Lord, we have left all, and followed Thee," was the word of every one of them.

III. Nor has the spell lost its power. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Our Lord in these words reveals the power which lies at the root of all the

grandest movements in the history of the world. Behind all that can be accounted for, all that can be weighed and measured by the act of the understanding in the spread of Christ's Gospel, there lies that which cannot be accounted for, which cannot be measured, the attraction of Christ Jesus. It is the spell which the Lord the King cast upon His subjects, in right of His ancient, universal royalty, and by the might of His newly revealed and transcendent love.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 97.

REFERENCE: iv. 20.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xix., p. 278.

Chap. iv., vers. 21, 22.—"And He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him."

I. ST. JAMES may be regarded as affording an example and encouragement to those who follow Christ, in two sorts of trials, more particularly those which arise from a thriving condition in the world, and those which attend, sometimes, on a quiet and comfortable home. To obey our Lord's call, he left both "the ship and his father:" both the business to which he had been brought up, and on which he might depend, if not for wealth, at least for a comfortable maintenance; and the consolation of being with his parents, and living peaceably at home with them.

II. It might seem almost presumption for such as we are to take to ourselves, as if intended for our pattern, the example of so great and holy a saint, one brought so very near the person of our Divine Saviour Himself. But we know that it is not presumptuous, since even Christ's own example, and that of the Eternal Father, are set before us for our study and imitation. Does any man ask how he can imitate St. James, he, a private Christian, not called to be an apostle, not summoned by the providence of God to any one great sacrifice, which might gather, as it were, into one the self-denials of a whole life? Let such a one think this within himself, that there may be, there probably are, occasions in which his worldly business, whatever it be, is apt to interfere, more or less, with his duty to our Saviour. The memory and fancy of his shop, his plough, his garden, or his loom mingles unseasonably with his prayers and holy readings, and tries to hinder him from attending to his Saviour's voice, inwardly whispering, "Follow Me." Well, on all such occasions, let us manfully put aside the intruding thought, saying as Felix did, but with a better meaning, "Go thy way now, and come again when I shall have a convenient season."

III. Persons who, in sincerity and truth, make sacrifices of

this kind, who really prefer not their own fancy, but Christ's will, even to family comfort, may find great encouragement in the favour which our Lord showed to His holy Apostle St. James. Their prayers for light and strength, they have every reason to hope, will be bountifully answered. "Christ will make Himself present to them, in all His works, both of mercy, of wonder, and of judgment." Whether He raise the dead, or show Himself in agony or in glory, or come to judge Jerusalem, those who have made great sacrifices for Him will be favoured and honoured witnesses.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vi., p. 142.

REFERENCES: iv. 21, 22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 24; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 305.

**Chap. iv., ver. 23.—"Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."**

I. CHRIST was dispensing, then, the gift of healing, marvellously, for an example to all who should believe on Him thereafter, for ever, as long as the world should stand. Healer of the diseases of the body, as he was Healer of the diseases of the soul, Jesus Christ, anointed Saviour, this was His mission—to heal, to save. He was Himself the Good Samaritan, who went out of His way to help the wounded traveller who lay half dead by the wayside, and who provided everything that was needful for him—lodging, attendance, provision—until he should be quite recovered. What was this but to teach us that the poor and needy in anywise are committed to the care and charge of every one who sees their hard case and has power to relieve it? Given the opportunity, the duty follows; cannot be neglected without sin—the sin, at least, of leaving undone what we ought to have done.

II. The duty of giving is one of the simplest duties of all life, and because it is so simple the Apostle has fenced it with the warning, "Be not deceived in this thing; God is not mocked." Our own day of sickness and trial is not far off. To have considered the poor and needy, to have been, as it were, eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, strength to the weak in body, will be a thought of comfort when we shall feel in our own bodies the need of every consolation which God vouchsafes to His servants in the day of their calamity.

BISHOP CLAUGHTON, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 738.

REFERENCES: iv. 23, 24.—H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 75; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 164. iv. 23-25.—

Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 333. iv. 24.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Manifesto of the King*, p. 3. iv.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 219.

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Chap. v., vers. 1-10.

I. THE Beatitudes open that discourse which, whatever may be the difficulties of particular parts of it, has always been recognized as the most important part of the New Testament. It is, as it has been well called, the *magna charta* of Christianity.

II. The Beatitudes put before us what are those qualities and what are those results which alone the Founder of our religion regarded as of supreme excellence. Often in revivals and in confessions on our death-beds people ask us, "Are you happy?" "Are you saved?" Christ gives us the answer: "You are happy, you are saved, if you seek the happiness (1) of modesty, (2) of compassion with sorrow, (3) of gentleness, (4) of an eager desire for justice, (5) of purity and singleness of purpose, (6) of kindness to man and beast, (7) of pacific and loving intercourse, (8) of perseverance in spite of difficulty."

III. Again, the Beatitudes, as they are called, or in other words declaring the happiness of those who fulfil these things in their own lives, is perhaps the best way of leading us to practise them. He does not say, "Be merciful," or "Be pure in heart," but He says, "Happy are the merciful, happy are the pure in heart"—that is to say, He points out that the happiness of which we all of us, rich or poor, are in search can be found in one or other of these Divine qualities.

IV. The Beatitudes furnish to us the great goal or end which will solve to us many difficulties in the great battle of life which we all have before us. Those qualities of which our Saviour spoke are within the reach of all of us; and they amply serve to sustain us in all the conflicts of poverty and distress with which many of us are encompassed.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 385.

Chap. v., vers. 1, 2.

GENERAL Outline of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount consists—

I. Of an introduction, beginning at ver. 3 and ending with ver. 16 of Matt. v. The peculiar characteristic of these opening sentences is, the kind of man whom Christ pronounces happy. The Beatitudes open up to us a new world of spiritual character and holy beauty, and consequent joy, such as had

not entered into the heart of man to conceive. They show us that happiness lies, not in outward circumstances, but in inward life.

II. The text or topic of the discourse (v. 17-19): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." This appears to me to be the great leading principle discussed and illustrated in the remainder of the sermon. Christ did not come to destroy the law. Indeed, no true servant of God is ever sent merely on a work of destruction. He may have to pluck up, to pull down, but he has also to build and to plant.

III. Such being the great theme of this sermon, the rest of it appears to me intended to illustrate and enforce this statement. And He explains this principle by showing that the law must be kept, and not in the letter only, but in the spirit. (2) The second illustration of the great idea of the sermon is comprised in the first eighteen verses of the sixth chapter, and it is to the effect that God's law can only be fulfilled by utter sincerity and truthfulness. (3) The theme of the sermon is further enforced by a series of warnings and illustrations directed specially against a worldly spirit, and enjoining a practical faith in God, and this third part occupies the remainder of chap. vi., from ver. 19 to the end. (4) The last illustration of the way in which the law is to be fulfilled is finely expressed in chap. vii. 12: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the great law of sympathy, without which we cannot do the will of our Father in heaven.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: v. 1, 2.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 77; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 92; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 209; C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 503; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 149. v. 1-3.—H. Wace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 104; Bishop Cotton, *Marlborough Sermons*, p. 254. v. 2.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., Appendix, p. 13. v. 2-10.—E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 274.

### Chap. v., vers. 3, 4.

I. "BLESSED are the poor in spirit." This, like so many of our Saviour's words, is, as it were, a little parable in itself. As the poor man is with regard to the substance of this world, so is the poor man in spirit with regard to the various attractions of the soul and spirit. It is, as we should say, "Blessed are the

unselfish; happy are those who live for others, and not for themselves; happy are those who leave a large margin in their existence for the feelings which come to us from what is above, and also from what is around us. It is well said that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We do not, perhaps, perceive at once the success of those who are thinking of higher things; but nevertheless, in the long run, it is sure to be theirs. There is a story told of a Welsh chieftain, who, on coming with his followers to a river, said, "He who will be master must first make himself a bridge;" and he carried them, one after another, on his back until they reached the opposite shore. That is what we must do; we must make ourselves the slaves of others, doing their work, securing their interests; if we wish to be in a high sense their lords and masters, we must be all of us in our way servants of the public, not by doing their bidding, but by defending their interests, not by listening to their follies, but by seeking their good.

II. "Blessed are they that mourn." There is in grief a tranquillizing, solemnizing, elevated wisdom, which transports even the most hardened into a region beyond himself. Any one who thinks how greatly he would regret bitter or foolish words or acts against the dead as they lie before him has a constant reminder that such acts and words are against the best spirit of man as he lives and moves among his fellows.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol xix., p. 401.

Chap. v., vers. 3-12.

INTRODUCTORY Beatitudes.

I. The first Beatitude pronounces a blessing on those who are Poor in Spirit. Let the limitation, the "in spirit," be carefully borne in mind. Poverty itself is not a blessing, nor does it always inherit a blessing.

II. The Lord blesses those that Mourn. Again, let me say that sorrow, no more than poverty, is a blessed thing in itself. God made laughter as well as tears, and grief is no more Divine than gladness. The grief, like the poverty, must be of a godly sort ere it profit much.

III. The Meek are blessed. The meek are those who go through the world in a gentle, unobtrusive way, without forward self-assertion. They shall inherit the earth; they do not lay any claim to it, and on that very account it shall be given to them.

IV. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be blessed. Blessed, verily, is that man, for he shall be satisfied.

His longing shall find peace in Jesus Christ the righteous. He shall drink of the living water and never thirst again.

V. The Merciful are blessed. Mercy is twofold. We call it pity when it has compassion on those who are suffering; we call it mercy when it extends forgiveness to those who have done us wrong. The meek man endures an injury; the merciful man forgives it.

VI. The Pure in Heart are blessed. By this it is not meant to indicate men who are altogether sinless, for in that case, few as there may be now to inherit the blessing, they would be fewer still,—or rather, there would be none at all. The pure in heart are they who seek spiritual cleansing, who would purge out every evil thought, and all the leaven of unrighteousness.

VII. The Peacemaker is blessed. Very beautiful, surely, is the office of the peacemaker, well befitting the man whose God is a God of Peace, whose Saviour is the Prince of Peace, whose hope is in the Gospel of Peace, whose joy is that the very Peace of God keeps his heart and soul.

VIII. The Persecuted are blessed—those who are evil spoken of and evil entreated for Christ's sake. The world hates them, but the world is not worthy of them.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 20.

REFERENCE: v. 9-12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. ii., p. 554.

Chap. v., ver. 4 (with Luke vi., vers. 21-25).—"**Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.**"

I. IN all mourning, be it for the dead or for the living, or for what worldly loss or calamity it may, there is hid, as it were, a beginning and seed of blessedness. If instead of putting it from us as an unwelcome visitor, we will meekly sit at its feet to hear its voice, it will fetch forth from its dark bosom the very consolations of God. It is not difficult to understand how this should be so: (1) All real mourning makes the heart softer and the spirit humbler; (2) it preaches sin and calls to repentance.

II. When a sinner has become, in the words of the first blessing, "poor in spirit," he has not exhausted, by a great deal, the feelings proper to an adequate view of his whole condition before God. He has, in truth, taken in but one side of his condition, and that its lower and earthward side. In proportion as the light of hope dawns, the soul is able to entertain another view of its own state. Set free in any measure from the presure of sin upon himself, as ruinous to his own prospects

a man can the better enter into its intrinsic evil as against God; its wrongness and the stain it leaves, its full burden of shameful and sorrowful heinousness in the sight of the jealous and Holy One. This is the second stage of experience; the deeper, nobler mourning which survives the anguish of the first anxiety, and settles into an abiding frame of spiritual life.

III. The hour of repentance does not stand alone. To a spiritual man there is pain in the mere presence of sin. A Christian carries within him what may make all his days a time of heaviness. Sin within us and without is a fact too central, too omnipresent, and too depressing ever to let the Christian escape from beneath its shadow. He is a man who has learnt neither to forget nor to despise the dark side of life; for he has opened himself with Christ to the curse, and bent with Christ to the cross. Yet in this mourning one is blessed. To do this brings a man into the fellowship with the sorrowing Christ, and thus within the region of Christ's own comforts. It is comfort, too, which will grow at last to perfect bliss. The sources of mourning will be dried up when sin is for ever dead; and the source of comfort will be reached when God is at last enjoyed.

J. Oswald Dykes, *The Beatitudes of the Kingdom*, p. 45.

References: v. 4.—Bishop Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 97; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 47; *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 229.

**Chap. v., ver. 5.—"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."**

The first three Beatitudes form the trilogy of Gospel humiliation, the descending steps—low, lower, lowest—by which the soul is converted, becomes as a little child.

I. In our endeavours to understand more exactly the quality of meekness, it will be suitable to start from the two Beatitudes already considered. When God brings a man to see that he is without resource, and must be lost in his own evil unless he will cry for help, it is commonly a considerable surprise and discomfiture to the man. The step down from an average state of content with himself to abject poverty of spirit is a deep step and must be taken with a shock. The pride of independence is broken for good. But whom God first breaks He afterwards melts. Sorrow softens, and the state which results from this twofold process of breaking and of softening—the attitude to God in which the "hammer" and the "fire" leave a man—is meekness. For I think this meekness is first of all a state towards God, not man. It is that tameness of spirit which

ensues on the death of self-righteousness or self-assertion before our heavenly Father.

II. Let us next approach the text from its other side, the side of the promise. This promise has a history in Scripture. It dates back as far as the call of Abraham. Its form then was a promise to inherit, not the earth, but the land, though one term is used for both with such studied duality of reference as to baffle translation. Just as the "seed of Abraham" was an ambiguous expression, enclosing within its obvious national reference, as in a shell, a hidden kernel of spiritual significance, one day to burst and outgrow the national, so the promise of the land foreshadowed and enwrapt the much more magnificent promise of "the earth." From the worldly God wrests even this their chosen beatitude, and gathers up at last this crumb also for children's bread, that not even earth's old loveliness of material worth, and the primal blessing which it wore, may be lost or wasted. He will not let the saints lose what the saints count loss for Him.

J. OSWALD DYKES, *The Beatitudes of the Kingdom*, p. 61.

THE Meek and their Inheritance.

I. Who are the meek? whom, at least, would Christ be intending by the term? You know how it is generally applied. He is meek, we say, who submits uncomplainingly and with gracious resignation to inevitable ills; or who bears patiently, without passionate resentment, without seeking to retaliate, insult or injury. But if we would understand what it was that Christ meant by this term, we ought perhaps to look back to the Scriptures from which He is quoting, and see how it is employed there. The meek, on the page of the Psalmist, are those who, in spite of what is calculated to irritate, to unsettle, to stagger, to dishearten, or to draw aside from adherence to the true, are found calmly, quietly persisting in their allegiance. And would not such be the meekness which Christ was contemplating—the meekness which, believing deeply, serenely holds on, in fidelity to its best vision, whatever there may be to vex or beguile?

II. Meekness, you will find, is frequently indicated in our sacred Scriptures as a prominent trait of the ideal teacher and the ideal governor; while we may think of it mostly in connection with pupils and with subjects, these Scriptures are found connecting it again and again with teaching and with governing. The meek governor is he who can be content to move slowly, to bide his time, to continue quietly steadfast in the apparently

barren labour of laying sure foundations, that the building, however decayed, may be stable and firm—in which sense God Almighty is the meekest of governors.

III. What is the inheritance of the earth promised to the meek? Suppose we take the land, as we well may, to represent what is most solid, substantial, and enduring; is it not true that meekness tends to inherit that? Men exhaust themselves, wear themselves out, in anxious devisings and weary working for things—for pleasure, for influence, for repute, for standing—when, if nobly at rest from impetuous self-seeking, and surrendered to calm, undistracted persistence in truth and duty, they would wake to find themselves presently in ample possession of these; for "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

S. A. TIPPLE, *Sunday Morning at Norwood*, p. 55.

REFERENCES: v. 5.—Bishop Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 107; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 63; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 373.

Chap. v., vers. 5, 6.

I. "BLESSED are the meek." The word "meek" hardly expresses the quality which is meant in the original. It is too passive a word; it does not sufficiently represent the actual character which is intended. In the French translation it is, "*Bienheureux sont les débonnaires;*" that is, "Happy are the gracious, graceful Christian characters who by their courtesy win all hearts around them, and smooth all the rough places of the world." Perhaps "Blessed are the gentle" would best express it.

II. The next quality which our Saviour blesses is thus expressed: "They who hunger and thirst after righteousness." He does not say those who have attained righteousness, but those who have a hungering and craving after that which they, perhaps, have not reached; and, perhaps, which they never, in this life, may fully attain to; but which to seek after is the truest ambition of the children of God. When we look out into the world, when we see how much there is of falsehood and injustice and oppression all around, there is one consoling thought, and that is to see some who are filled with earnest desire to make things better than they are. There is a representation in the Catacombs, on Christian tombs, and as the first sign of Christian life, of a stag drinking eagerly at the silver stream. This is the true likeness of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. When we toil

towards the close of our earthly course, or in any especial period of it; when we feel stifled by the sultry and suffocating sense of the hardness and selfishness of the world about us; when our breath is, as it were, choked by the dust and trifles and forms and fashions of the world's vast machinery, we may still join the cry, "I thirst, for the refreshing sight of any pure, upright, generous spirit; I thirst, for the day when I may drink freely of God's boundless charity; I thirst, for the day when I shall hear the sound of abundance of rain, and a higher heaven than that which now encloses us round." Happy are they who, when they see generous deeds and hear of generous characters higher than their own, long to be like them. It is our business to keep up the chase; not to cease our efforts to quench this thirst; never to be weary in well-doing; and to believe that in this hunger and thirst is the spring of true religion.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 8.

Chap. v., vers. 4, 6.—"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. . . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

THE Ladder of Perfection. Though there is, and evidently there is meant to be, a progression, an ascent upwards, both in the characters that are blessed and in the blessings that are given, yet it is not meant that we are to be perfect in the lower character before we proceed to the higher. Far otherwise, for indeed the very first of all is humility; but if we waited till we were perfect in humility, before we attempted to rise to that which stands next above it, we should wait all our lives. A certain measure of humility is the condition of being a Christian at all, and perfect humility is the crown of Christian perfectness.

I. So, then, it is true that mourning for sin stands on a lower level than hungering and thirsting for righteousness. But for all that, we are not to wait till our sorrow for our faults shall be in some way commensurate with the evil of them before we endeavour to rise above faults altogether, and to render positive service. To mourn over faults and fight against them is not only right, it is indispensable. But some men's lives are quite filled with this. Such men are in some degree a burden both to themselves and others on this account. They have a much keener sense of the wrong of doing wrong than than the necessity of doing right. They hate disobedience, but

their obedience is too anxious, too disturbed by fears that they are not obedient enough, to be hearty and cheerful.

II. While both are needed, both true penitence and true longing for holiness, yet the latter is the higher. It is of course possible, perhaps it is not very uncommon, to have neither the the one nor the other. But I speak to those who, while conscious that they are often wanting either in the one or the other, yet are not altogether without a sense of both. And to them I say it must be remembered that the desire for good is higher in its own nature than the sorrow for evil. The Christian is penitent, and the Christian strives to be a loving child of God, but he knows that the love is more than the repentance. Let not, then, your sorrow for sin stop at sorrow. Try to attain nobleness of obedience, and not mere preciseness.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 210.

WHAT is hunger? It is to want, to crave, to feel an aching sense of emptiness, to long for that for the lack of which the very life seems to fail, the wheels of being to move slower—to want and not to get. Hunger is the goad of nature that makes us work; but the natural man hungers for that which effort can gain him. He hungers for bread. He hungers for wealth, for ease, for honour, for affection. We expect of life and of human organizations of it that hunger of other kinds should gain its satisfaction. But the Christian hunger is hunger that must remain hunger. The very paradox of the blessing pronounced is that those who follow the shadow shall find it the substance: "they shall be filled." The impossible is, in a deeper sense, the possible, the real. It is those who clutch, as they think, the substance, the solid, calculable "good things of this world," who find them turn to emptiness in their grasp. What does the text mean for us?

I. For ourselves in our own hearts, remember that the blessing, the high place in the kingdom, the real attainment of what they long for, is for those who hunger for goodness, in whose heart it is a real, passionate, unsatisfied craving.

II. Not for ourselves only. God has not set us each by himself to purify, as best we may, each his own heart. He has set us together. He has formed us into societies one with another, binding us by a thousand links to our fellows, so that none can stand without helping others to stand, nor fall without dragging others down with him; linking even generation to generation, so that the effect of our acts seems to echo

through all time. We shall not love goodness, hunger and thirst for it, in ourselves, unless we love it, long and crave and cry and strive to see it also ruling in the world about us.

III. "They shall be filled." To be filled is to be satisfied, and to be satisfied is to cease from hungering; and that in this case would be death, not life. Yet in many cases it is a truth which we can verify. Those that hunger most have most. It means (1) that those who long most to find good in this world find it most—in place sundreamed of, in hearts given up as desperate. (2) That if they do not see it, those who look on see the wilderness round them blossoming; and, even if they do not fully realize it, that must carry peace into their hearts and joy of the Holy Ghost. (3) That God's chief way of rewarding effort is to open the way to further effort.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 51.

I. THOUGH springing out of the three first Beatitudes, which I call the circle of humiliation, there is a new element apparent in this fourth one. These were negative: they weakened, they lowered, they discouraged; they were the emptying, saddening, and bruising, consequent on a knowledge of sin. This one, on the contrary, is positive and strong. It lifts itself up with wholesome and cheerful desire, and reaches out after far and high achievements in virtue. It is when Christian experience has plunged to the bottom and touched ground that, like the fabled giant, it leaps up with mightiest resolve to win heaven.

II. The features of special blessedness in the moral appetite of the Christian next deserve notice. (1) The Christian appetite has in it this excellent blessedness—that it has found the right object of desire. The soul's true food has been set before his eyes, and he has been taught to hunger after that. The hunger of a Christian soul after righteousness is now a hunger simply to be like Jesus, a hunger whetted evermore by the vision of Him in His beauty. The conformity of righteousness is desired now, not as conformity to a hard or cold imperative from heaven, but as assimilation through sympathy to the very heart which for ever beats and glows in holy love within the Beloved of our hearts. (2) A second blessedness, and the central one, attached to this Christian appetite for righteousness is that it shall be filled. Those who have tasted once of the Lord's grace need never suffer the pain and hopeless consumption of unsatisfied desire; but they ought to have a

hunger, more regular, if less painful—hunger day by day for daily bread. Satisfaction, contentment for Christian men, there can be none short of righteousness in its supreme form—the righteousness of the Son's perfect likeness to the Father's character. For that let us hunger on; after that let us thirst: so shall ours be the blessedness, first, of desire, and then the better blessedness of attainment; for we "shall be filled."

J. OSWALD DYKES, *The Beatitudes of the Kingdom*; see also *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 81.

REFERENCES: v. 6.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 221, vol. xxii., p. 92; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 56; Bishop Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 119; C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 398; F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 21.

**Chap. v., ver. 7.—"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."**

"BLESSED are the merciful." This does not mean the soft and easy natures which confound the distinctions of right and wrong. Nor does it mean that mere humanity and kindliness which are native to some spirits, and which find a pleasure in seeing all around them happy. But the mercifulness of the text is a principle and a grace. It comes from the happy sense of forgiveness. It is the mercifulness of one who not only seeks to obtain mercy, but who has obtained it already.

I. Mercifulness is commiseration for suffering men. Though under the government of a God of love, this world is the abode of much suffering, because it has been, and still is, the theatre of much sin. God leaves the Christian here that he may be the channel of God's beneficence and the perpetuation of His Master's kindness.

II. Mercifulness is compassion for the souls of men. This sort of mercy is a surer test of piety. Blessed are they whose pity, like the Divine compassion, seeks the lost.

III. The merciful man is considerate of the comfort and feelings of others—of their health and comfort. From want of forethought, or want of timely activity on their own part, people who are not cruel often perpetrate great cruelties. Blessed are they whose thoughtful vigilance and sympathetic delicacy make them the guardians and the comforters of acute and tender natures, a balm to those feelings which are over-exquisite, and a tonic to those which are too susceptible.

IV. The merciful man is considerate of his neighbour's character. Perhaps there is no production of our world so

rare and precious, and yet none which has so many enemies or is so generally attacked, as character. We are apt, in heedlessness or bitterness, to take up or even get up a prejudice against particular persons; their oddities, their opposition to our opinions, their successful rivalry in our own line of life, make us severe or hostile censors, and too ready to believe or repeat what is spoken to their disadvantage. But nothing can be more alien to the spirit of the Gospel. It urges us to resemble God Himself, who is the great Guardian of reputations and the Avenger of injured rectitude.

V. The merciful man is merciful to his beast. Blessed are the merciful; for their merciful disposition is an indication of what they are, and an earnest of what awaits them. They have found mercy, and they shall obtain mercy.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 1.

REFERENCES: **v. 7.**—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 37; Bishop Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 131; Bishop Magee, *Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 4; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 101; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 385; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 1.

Chap. v., vers. 7, 8.

I. "BLESSED are the merciful." The object of the Beatitudes is to bring out one particular quality, without commending the other qualities which may exist in the same character. We see many men of very imperfect morality, and yet in whom this quality of mercy is such that we feel that, if it were universal among mankind, the whole world would be the happier for it, and that in those in whom it is found it is a redeeming virtue in the proper sense of the word—a virtue which redeems from condemnation and detestation the whole character in which it is found embedded. We cannot believe that the generous and merciful acts of such men as these can ever be lost in the sight of God by reason of the other faults with which they are surrounded. It is the very quality on which our Saviour's blessing has been most distinctly pronounced. "Forgive," He says, "and ye shall be forgiven." And the feeling of posterity, and the feeling of contemporaries, is, after all, some slight index of what we may call in this respect the final judgment of God.

II. "Blessed are the pure in heart." The words may bear a twofold meaning—pure, disinterested love of truth, and pure, clean aversion to everything that defiles. (1) Pure love of

truth. How very rare, yet how very beneficent! Look at Sir Isaac Newton, the most famous name which Westminster Abbey contains. It was said by those who knew him that he had the whitest soul they had ever known—the whitest especially in this, that no consideration ever came across his desire of propounding and of ascertaining the exact truth on whatever subject he was engaged. (2) Purity from all that defiles and stains the soul. Filthy thoughts, filthy actions, filthy words—we know what they are without attempting to describe them. Of all the obstacles which may intervene between us and an insight into the virtue which is the nature of the Invisible and the Divine, nothing presents so coarse and so thick a veil as, on the one hand, a false, artificial, crooked way of looking at truth, and, on the other hand, at the indulgence of brutal and impure passions, which lower our sight; and nothing can so clear up our better thoughts, nothing leave our minds so open to receive the impression of what is good and noble, as the single eye and the pure conscience.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 24.

**Chap. v., ver. 8.—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."**

To see God—that has been the deep desire of living souls through all time. Men of earnest spirits have ever felt, instinctively, that the highest blessedness of life must consist in the vision of God—not in a vision of His glory, revealed to the perishing eye of the body, but that spiritual vision of Him which belongs to the soul that has fellowship with the Divine.

I. We begin by inquiring into the meaning of purity of heart; for it is only by understanding in what that purity consists that we shall see how the vision of God rises from it. There is no true purity apart from the absolute enthronement of God in the affections. It is not the absence of unholy affections, it is the presence of a holy and surpassingly earnest love, that makes us really pure. The soul is so supremely an altar that it must worship something in its inmost shrine, and unless it worship God there it cannot be pure. His presence there, and it alone, can rob temptation of its charm, dispel all carnal longings, throw back the fierce onset of ancient and besetting sins, and make the heart utterly holy.

II. Purity of heart gives the vision of God. In proceeding to illustrate this, let us observe emphatically that the phrase "see God" does not refer to any manifestation of His glory

visible to the eye of sense. It is to the far deeper sight of the soul that Christ refers: to feel in the spirit His presence—to exult in the fellowship of the Infinite, Perfect, and Eternal One—that is to see God. (1) None but the pure in heart can see Him. The proof of this lies in the fact that the vision of the soul rises from its affections; the heart can see that only which it loves. (2) To the pure in heart the full glory of the Divine nature reveals itself.

III. That vision is its own exceeding blessedness. (1) It is blessed because to see God satisfies the longings of the heart. The restlessness vanishes. The distractions of change cease. Man's soul is at home with God. Therefore, "Blessed are the pure in heart." (2) It is blessed because it clothes life in glory. (3) It is blessed because it is the dawning of immortal hope.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 180.

Chap. v., ver. 8 (with Titus i., ver. 15).—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. . . . Unto the pure all things are pure," etc.

THE two texts are two motives. With one voice they enforce purity, but each by its own argument and with its own persuasion. The one looks rather at the future, the other at the present; the one tells us how purity shall enable us to move healthily and wholesomely among our fellows, the other how it shall fit and qualify us for that beatific vision which is, being interpreted, the inheritance of the saints in light.

I. St. Paul is addressing a loved convert, charged with the temporary oversight of the young Church of Crete. "To the pure," he says, "all things are pure; but to the defiled nothing is pure." If the heart be defiled, the result must be the contamination of the living and moving and acting man. Sin secretly cherished becomes not more a disease than a pestilence. To the impure nothing is pure; he carries defilement with him. St. Paul speaks of the intellect and the conscience as sharing the purity or else the impurity of the heart. The impure heart makes the conscience itself impure. By degrees it not only loses its sensitiveness to right and wrong; worse far than all this, it comes even to confuse, to distort, and to invert its own vision, and to be no longer a trustworthy index, when the man for once would consult it on some question of practical duty.

II. The motive was a strong one which said, "To the pure all things are pure." Be pure in heart, and you shall find or

else make purity everywhere. Be pure in heart, and intellect shall be pure, and conscience; no film shall cloud the mental vision, no stain shall sully the mirror of duty. But "blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." This lifts the matter into a higher region still, and tells how, not mind alone, not conscience alone, but the very spirit and soul of the man, hangs upon purity of heart for its welfare and for its life. If there be in any of us the desire hereafter or here to see God, to see Him in His beauty, and to see Him in His goodness, and to see Him in His truth—if we feel that not to see Him is misery, that never to see Him would indeed be the "second death"—we must become pure in heart.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, November 4th, 1880; see also *Temple Sermons*, p. 390, and *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 52.

I. PURITY of heart is the absence of anything that troubles, that darkens—passion, greed, selfish ambition. Purity of heart! not merely freedom from ceremonial defilement: that was only the husk intended to protect the ripening fruit, the precious idea, within. When the seed is ripe the husk parts and breaks away. Purity of heart! not merely purity of act; cleanness, soundness of affections as well as will, the spirit to which evil gives no pleasure, rather inspires loathing and contempt.

II. And now the blessing: "For they shall see God." Of what time is this said? Of the sight of Him in the world beyond the grave, the Beatific Vision? We must not exclude this meaning, if for no other reason, because it is a meaning which the beloved Apostle saw in the words. Yet we shall be going against the spirit of all the Beatitudes if we make that the only meaning. The blessings promised throughout are not merely future blessings, but present: "Blessed *are* . . ." They are the graces, beauties, dignities, of the kingdom of heaven; and the kingdom of heaven is not future only, but present, set up, even as our Lord spoke, among men. The Beatific Vision itself is to begin on earth. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," not only by-and-by, but even now.

III. We see in our Lord's words an image of the manner in which the highest spiritual truth is attained by man, and of the hindrances which prevent his attaining it. The image naturally suggested by His words, taken together, is of a man looking

down into water and seeing the moon and the stars, the glories of heaven, mirrored in it. If the sight is to be firmly and clearly seen, the surface must be clean and still like some deep, calm mountain lake, not clouded with scum and weeds, nor blackened by gusts or cross-currents, not fretted like the shallow rapid stream over the inequalities of its pebbly bed. God reveals Himself—so the thought seems to run in the heart—if the heart be clean and still. The man whose heart is distracted with the cares and ambitions of the world, blackened with gusts of evil passion, cannot see God; the faculty is paralyzed, gone. He may try to look, may catch a broken sight for a moment, but he cannot look steadily, or there has gathered a film over the surface and he can see nothing.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 59.

"CALL no man happy till he dies" is what the old Greek sage said, and it was supposed to be a very sage saying indeed. The happiness which is implied in that poor comfort is of a very negative kind. It simply means that you will be happy because you will have done with things. It hopes for the calm of a corpse, for the rest of the grave—knows nothing of any open gates beyond. The greatest philosopher, the grandest sage of all, says, "Happy *are* the pure in heart." If you can only get purity, then you can reap your harvests in mid-winter, you can bask in sunlight when the sky is dark, and your fireside shall glow in grateful content when there is no fire behind the bars.

I. Happiness and the heart are put together. This happiness is real, because its home is in the heart. That is its seat of power.

II. Even Jesus cannot give you happiness while self and Satan rule. He cannot pair happiness with iniquity. If you are to be happy, sin must die. Christ came to kill it; hence that grandest of texts, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." If you will open your heart to admit Jesus, that He may come on His sin-killing errand, then as surely as He crosses the threshold, so surely shall you see two twin angels coming just behind Him with brows laden with glory; and the name of the one is Happiness, and the name of the other is Purity.

III. The pure in heart shall see God. The sight and knowledge of God are the cause and current of the Christian's joy. The pure in heart shall stand in the face of the King,

in the presence of the eyes of Royalty; and the gifts which they receive shall be according to His infinite love, and according to His infinite power.

IV. They shall see God (1) in nature's mirror. Creation's visions and voices in every colour and in every key-note will prompt the pure in heart with remembrance of the Father that made them all. (2) In His providence. (3) In the mysteries they cannot understand.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Penny Pulpit* (New Series), No. 1,114.

REFERENCES: v. 8.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 350; W. Dorling, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 168; J. Lloyd, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 238; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 92; Bishop Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 143; J. Oswald Dykes, *Manifesto of the King*, p. 119; G. Salmon, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 129; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 88.

**Chap. v., ver. 9.—"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."**

THE Church as a Peacemaker.

I. Christ the Peacemaker, Christ the Peacegiver, Christ who is to be yet the King of universal peace, is the Christ we worship and serve; and this threefold peace—the peace that Christ has wrought for us in reconciling us to God, the peace that Christ works in our hearts as we believe in Him, the perfect peace He will yet bring to a restored world and a rejoicing Church—makes the faith and the hope and the joy of the Church now. We not only believe in and enjoy and look for this peace, but we are or ought to be engaged in making it now on earth. That is the description He Himself gives of His Church. The text is the one beatitude of all the seven which pictures for us the Church of Christ in action; and the one distinctive work, the great thing Christ has given in charge to His Church to do on earth, is to make peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

II. While Christ bids His Church be a peacemaker in the world, He marks her out also to be the Church militant here on earth. Now this double character, this character of warlikeness and peacefulness, is not only stamped upon the Church by Christ Himself in her history, but we see it in His own life. Never was there such a peacemaker; and never, on the other hand, was there such a warrior; never was there one who spoke so sternly as a prophet, so sharply and resolutely as a judge, so keenly, so searchingly and provocatively as a

reformer, as Christ our Lord, Christ the Warrior, whose warfare is as a consuming fire; Christ the Peacemaker, whose words are all tenderness and love.

III. The mission and purpose of Christ in this world was the destruction of all evil. All evil, whether it be evil of error or whether it be the evil of sin in practice, opposes itself to the mission and purpose of Christ and His Church, and must be removed if that mission is to succeed. Christianity is necessarily an intolerant religion, and as such it provokes strife, and as such we must not fear to provoke it. And yet we, in our warfare for truth, have need to remember that we are also peacemakers. If we honestly desire truth and hate error, then we must honestly recognise truth wherever we meet it. We must take heed lest with our statement of the truth we provoke and intensify, by any fault in our statement, by any error in our conception of it, the very error that we are warring against. The Church in her dealing with error is to be ever militant as her Master was, ever to be peace-loving, peace-bringing, peace-seeking, even as He was too, and for His sake.

BISHOP MAGEE, *The Family Churchman*, March 2nd, 1887.

I. THE world is full of peacebreakers.

II. The world's heart is the same in every age.

III. The world listened to a Peacemaker.

IV. The world is at variance with the Divine philosophy.

V. The world has no pedigree so illustrious as that of the Peacemaker.

W. M. STATHAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 232.

REFERENCES: v. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 422; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 77; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 366; Bishop Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 153; J. Oswald Dykes, *Manifesto of the King*, p. 139; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 27. v. 10-12.—E. De Pressensé, *The Mystery of Suffering*, p. 74; J. Oswald Dykes, *Manifesto of the King*, p. 161.

### Chap. v., ver. 11.—"For My sake."

THE words of the text contain a distinct and cogent motive for religious life and service. We are to be religious men and to do religious things "for Christ's sake."

I. The urgency of such a motive involves a very distinct doctrine concerning Christ. It has important and suggestive bearings upon His distinctive character. (1) Is it not, to say

the least, a remarkable, nay a unique principle, of religious obligation? The claim is so daring, it is preferred so frequently and in such a lofty style of conscious right, He who prefers it is so intelligent and calm, so holy and so humble, that there is but one satisfactory explanation of it. There did pertain to our Lord a distinctive and Divine character, which made it congruous for the lowliest and calmest of men to claim the highest of prerogatives. (2) But clearly the urgency does not rest upon Divine prerogative merely or mainly. A deep human element enters into this claim of our Lord. He appeals to the great mystery and love of His incarnation. He solicits our religious affections by all the claims that a human embodiment of the Divine gives Him upon our human affections; thus gathering into His urgency every conceivable element of pathos and power—Divine and human—of heaven and of earth.

II. Look at the pertinence and power of this new and peculiar motive of the religious life, and at some of the practical applications of it. It applies a new motive power which makes the truth that it teaches resistless: the sentiment of personal love for Him whose teaching we receive, the strong masterful passion that is the constraint of all true service, a power of constraint that the most selfish and sinful and indolent cannot resist. Christ urges this motive as a reason (1) for the consecration of the religious life; (2) for sacrifice and endurance; (3) for martyrdom itself.

Note (1) what a power of assurance there is in the personal and tender relationships thus established between the Master and His disciples. (2) What power of constraint such a motive exerts upon our practical religious life. (3) What a power of judgment there is in such an urgency.

H. Allon, *The Vision of God*, p. 339.

I. What is the nature of Jesus's claims and demands? The words before us are few, but the obligations involved are exceeding broad. Those who are expected to respond to these words are supposed to believe on Jesus, to trust Him, and to love Him, and the claim made is for the recognition of His own worthiness, and of our personal obligations. (1) Jesus claims work for His sake. Real work is no light matter. It is, in fact, the conquest of certain difficulties. There can be no work where there are no difficulties to be overcome. Jesus Christ claims work, the kind of work by which bread is

earned and money gained, wrought for His sake. (2) We owe to Jesus Christ the patient endurance of suffering for His sake. Thorough and continuous work must, sooner or later, more or less, involve suffering. The prospect of suffering should not, however, prevent our undertaking work, nor should the endurance of it lead to our abandonment of work. The sorrows that are often incident to a sober, righteous, and godly life should not drive us from the path of righteousness. (3) Jesus claims cheerful and generous gifts for His sake. The gifts which He asks are according to that which we have, according to our ability and opportunity, time, power, influence, property, and ourselves as life-sacrifices. (4) Jesus Christ claims attachment to life, with a readiness to die for His sake. (5) Jesus claims the devotion of ourselves to Him. This is not necessarily included in the claims already named. The servant gives work, and in some cases suffering; the benefactor bestows gifts and services, but the wife has yielded herself to her husband. The true Christian is a servant of Christ, but something more; a disciple, but something more; the saved by Christ, but something more: Christ betroths His redeemed to Him for ever, and He claims the consecration of themselves.

II. Look at some of the means by which we may stir up ourselves to recognize the claims of Christ more cordially and perfectly. (1) Distinct ideas of the person of Christ are essential to our being moved by considerations which originate in Himself. (2) As another means of aiding our devotion to Jesus Christ we may name frequent meditation on the service He has rendered.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 295.

WE have here—

I. A Person. Religions can accomplish more than philosophers, because philosophers concern themselves with ideas and abstractions, and religions concern themselves with persons. It is true that religions may have their philosophies, too, as there is no religion without its creed; but it is equally true that a person is a greater power than a creed, and men will die for a person when they will not die for a creed or an abstract principle. Retain the *essential* and reject the *personal*, you cannot. The essential is the personal, and the personal is the essential. Christianity, so far as it embodies spiritual force and motive, so far as it meets man in his sin, weakness,

sorrow, and despair, is *Christ*—nothing less than Christ. Christianity has a personal voice—the voice of one person to another, the voice of Christ to man, and its voice is, "For My sake."

II. A unique Person. Upon what are the claims of the Saviour founded? The answer is twofold: (1) on what Christ is in His essential nature; (2) on what He has done for the benefit of man. The first ground is that of dignity, and the second is that of redemption, love, and service.

III. A unique Person who claims to be Lord of our life. And what, then, are we to do for the sake of Christ? (1) We are to labour for His sake; (2) we are to suffer for His sake. This is the one principle which will give unity to a life which, in the case of all of us, tends evermore to distraction, incoherency, fragmentariness, and therefore weakness. It will prove not merely an impulse, but one of undying might. Other motives may be powerful, but they are fitful too, and are like a summer brook, which to-day rushes and brawls, but to-morrow discovers nothing but a dry pebbly bed. "For Christ's sake"—its analogies are the great central unchanging forces of Nature; like the sun, which has no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And while it is the highest motive, it is also the clearest light for our guidance as to what is right and what is wrong.

E. Mellor, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 87.

References: v. 11.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Characteristics of the Christian Life*, p. 162; W. M. Taylor, *Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 5. v. 11, 12, 16.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 536.

### Chap. v., ver. 13.—"Ye are the salt of the earth," etc.

Consider: I. The high task of Christ's disciples as here set forth. "Ye are the salt of the earth." The metaphor wants very little explanation. It involves two things: a grave judgment as to the actual state of society, and a lofty claim as to what Christ's followers are able to do to it. Society is corrupt, and tending to corruption. You do not salt a living thing; you salt a dead one, that it may not be a rotting one. (1) Salt does its work by being brought into close contact with the thing which it is to work upon. And so we are not to seek to withdraw ourselves from contact with the evil. The only way by which the salt can purify is by being rubbed into the corrupted thing. (2) Salt does its work silently, inconspicuously, gradually.

We shall never be the light of the world, except on condition of being the salt of the earth. You have to do the humble, inconspicuous, silent work of checking corruption by a pure example before you can aspire to do the other work of raying out light into the darkness, and so drawing men to Christ Himself.

II. The grave possibility of the salt losing its savour. There is manifest on every side, first of all the obliteration of the distinction between the salt and the mass into which it is inserted; or, to put it into other words, Christian men and women swallow down bodily and practise thoroughly the maxims of the world as to life, and what is pleasant, and what is desirable, and as to the application of morality to business. There can be no doubt that the obliteration of the distinction between us and the world, and the decay of the fervour of devotion which leads to it, are both to be traced to a yet deeper cause, and that is the loss or diminution of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Is there a possibility of resalting the saltless salt, of restoring the lost savour? There is no obstacle in the way of a penitent returning to the Fountain of all power and purity, nor of the full restoration of the lost savour, if a man will only bring about a full reunion of himself with the Source of the savour.

IV. One last word warns us what is the certain end of the saltless salt. God has no use for it; man has no use for it. If it has failed in doing the only thing it was created for, it has failed altogether.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 179.

THE words before us suggest—

I. A dignity. "Ye are the salt of the earth." I need hardly remind you of the worth and honour of salt in the estimation of antiquity. Salt was the indispensable accompaniment of every sacrifice, because of its power to stay the progress of corruption, to keep that on which it was sprinkled, or with which it was mingled, pure and wholesome and sweet; and it was this property of salt, no doubt, that Christ had in His eye, transferring it to spiritual things, when He said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." They were salt, because they had been themselves salted with grace, salted with the purifying fire of the Holy Ghost, and so capable of imparting a savour of incorruption to others.

II. A danger; and what is this? That the salt of the earth

should lose its own savour, and so become incapable of imparting a savour to others. We know in the natural world how easily a little damp, a little moisture in the atmosphere, will affect the quality of salt; will deprive it of much, if not all, its sharp and biting and seasoning powers; will leave it flat and blunt and strengthless; useless, or nearly useless, for the one purpose to which it is designed. No less a danger besets *us*. The world in which we live is no favourable atmosphere for us, set as we are to be the salt of the earth. Many things are against us here; many things at work to cause us to abate our edge, to come down from our heights, to lose our saltness. What need, therefore, earnestly to watch against this so urgent a danger!

III. A doom. "It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Observe that "trodden under foot of men," which follows the being cast out or rejected of God; for therein lies the stress of the doom, the immeasurable humiliation of it. A Church, from which the savour and strength of Divine grace has departed, perishes not by the immediate hand of God—that were too noble a destiny—but of men, often the very men whom it sought to conciliate by becoming itself as the world.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons Preached in Ireland*, p. 106.

I. THIS sentence takes for granted the well-known doctrine of the general corruption and decay of the world around us. We little know how much we are indebted to the Christianity or, as we call it sometimes, the civilization of the world around us—how many men are sober and chaste simply because religion has so seasoned the society round them that they would lose their position if they were not so.

II. "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" It is possible, then, to have a thing which has lost its essence. A traveller to the Euphrates tells us that when he came to the Valley of Salt he broke off a piece that had been exposed to the rain, sun, and air, and he found that, although it had all the sparkle of the crystal, and all the other qualities of salt, it had lost its savour. And is not this so with many professing Christians? Do they not possess all the outward qualities of the Christian character, being pure in morals outwardly, respectable, decorous in general conduct? But they have allowed themselves to be so exposed, unprotected, to the temptations of the spirit of worldliness around them that all

savour is gone—all power of giving Christian purpose to the society in which they live. They are like crystals in the Valley of Salt.

III. If you have a secret consciousness that you have lost your savour, let me point out how you may become salt again. Go to Him from whom comes out virtue. Go to Him by daily prayer, by daily effort, by daily meditation, by daily repentance, by daily obedience to His voice, as far as you have heard it.

IV. If your desire is to salt the world, you must begin with yourself. You cannot salt other things if you have lost your saltness. If you want to do good, you must be good. Be unobtrusive; do not thrust your advice on any one; and often, when least you expect it, a heart will be opened to you, and God will permit you to save a brother from suffering or from sin or shame.

C. E. R. ROBINSON, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 622.

I. THIS declaration involves the idea that there is in humanity the liability to corruption.

II. Christ's method for the preservation of society is a personal one. The seasoning influence must come through men.

III. To this seasoning influence godliness is a vital necessity. Godliness is the true and only inspiration to goodness.

W. GARRETT HORDER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 180.

Chap. v., vers. 13-16.

INFLUENCE of Christian Character.

I. Christians—such Christians as those to whom the Beatitudes of the previous verses belong—are called to be, and will be, the "salt of the earth," and they are exhorted not to let "the salt" lose its savour. Two things seem to be involved in these words: (1) Salt gives relish to what would otherwise be tasteless or unpleasant; and Christ's people are, if we may so speak, the relishing element in the world, which prevents it from being loathsome altogether to the Lord; (2) salt is a preserving agent, arresting the natural tendency to corruption. Christ's people are called to this duty; they are to be the salt of the earth; let them take heed to fulfil their high calling. People we hear often sorrowfully complaining that the world is waxing worse and worse. Let those who complain of it bethink them whether they are playing their part as salt to check this corruption.

II. The second aspect under which the Christian influence

is presented here is, Believers are to be the light of the world. This figure carries the matter into a somewhat higher region. Salt makes the world endurable, bad as it is. Salt also prevents it from becoming still worse. But light quickens life; light shows the way of God, and leads into it; light at once develops and exhibits all the beauty of earth; light helps us to fellowship one with another; light awakens the voice of adoration and praise. (1) The Christian must be a light-bearer. He who brings the lamp is not himself a light, yet he brings light; and every man of God has it laid on him to do something in this way. (2) It is implied here that Christians are to be light-givers as well as light-bearers. To be a proper light-bearer, one must also be a true light-giver. For one soul saved by Christian precept, you shall find twenty saved by Christian example. The greatest sermon one can preach is the silent sermon of a true and pious life.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 37.

REFERENCES: v. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 28; J. G. Greenhough, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 263; G. W. McCree, *Ibid.*, p. 365; A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 54. v. 13-15.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 202. v. 13-16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 18; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 158; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 181.

Chap. v., ver. 14.—"Ye are the light of the world."

I. CONTEMPLATE the Christian man as light in himself. Notice some of the instances in Scripture in which light is spoken of in reference to the people of God. (1) The Psalmist says, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Here light is viewed as something distinct from the righteous, as something which he may possess and which he may enjoy, just as the husbandman enjoys the fruits of the earth of which he has cast in the seeds. (2) The Apostle, in addressing Christians, says, "Ye are the children of the light." Here we are conducted to a still higher view of the believer's privileged condition and estate. There is not only light sown for him that he may reap and enjoy, he is himself a child or son of light—a Hebraistic mode of strongly expressing the luminosity that completely suffuses, as it were, the Christian man. (3) But to a still higher reach we are conducted by the Apostle when he says to believers, "Ye are light in the Lord." Here they are identified with the light itself; and just as God is said to be a light, so are His people in their measure and in their degree said to be a light.

II. "Ye are the light of the world." Our Saviour seems to say to His people, "Not only have ye light for yourselves, not only has God in His grace given you light and made you to be light; but you are to be the light by which others are to be spiritually illuminated and guided for their souls' salvation." We do not need to make efforts to make the light shine, it shines of its own accord. Christianity is essentially diffusive. Its light cannot be confined. Its law is the law of beneficence. It has freely received, and it freely gives. The light with which the true Christian has to shine is (1) the light of Divine knowledge, (2) the light of moral purity. If Christian people would be true benefactors of the world, they must let their light shine, that men seeing their good works may glorify their Father who is in heaven.

L. ALEXANDER, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 524.

I. WE read of a time when this earth, so full of fair shapes and wonderful provisions, was without form and void. The Lord that giveth life was pleased to summon out of this confusion the arrangements and the capacities of a world. But before all this His work one word was uttered—one element called into being—which was necessary for every function of created nature. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" and from that first day to this the natural light of this world has never failed. There must be light in nature, or the plant will dwindle, the animal will pine, the world will become joyless and waste; there must be light, too, in the world of spirits, or discord and confusion will reign where harmony and order ought to be. And man's spirit *had* light, even the only light which can light it to its well-being—the light of the consciousness of God.

II. Let this conformity with God's appointment be established in nature, and as long as nature lasts God will be glorified. But in the higher world of spirits there is another necessary condition which nature has not. Wherever there is spirit there must be responsibility, and there cannot be responsibility without free will. Nature, in her lower and more rigidly prescribed arrangements, cannot extinguish the light of her world; but man's spirit may extinguish the light of his. And man's spirit did extinguish that light, and the spiritual world became anarchy and confusion.

III. If nature decays, she possesses no power of self-renewal. Her extinct tribes she may not recall; her faded flowers she

cannot recover. Not thus did God create His more wonderful spiritual world. That the spirit should, by His aid, struggle upwards through darkness into the recovery of light, was His own purpose respecting us. In God's good time the Light which was to lighten every man came into the world. Now, the whole passage of man's life, from the cradle to the grave, is full of light. According to our place in life, so God expects from us that we should shine out in the darkness of the world which yet knows not Him. H. ALFORD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 406.

Chap. v., ver. 14.—"A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."

THERE is little difficulty in fixing the dominant idea contained in the metaphor. The city upon a hill is the landmark for all the country round. It is at once the crown of the district and the central point round which the life of the neighbourhood turns. It is visible afar off; it overtops the lower country, so that the people cannot, if they wish, shut their eyes and refuse to see it. The one idea is that of publicity. What does this teach us as to the Church of Christ? There are two sides of religion—neither in the least degree opposed to the other, though entirely distinct. In one point of view it is a secret principle, working noiselessly in the soul of a man, subduing gradually his evil propensities, weakening and destroying his corrupt appetites. There is another side of the Christian religion—namely, that of witnessing for God in the midst of perverse generations. This is the way in which it fulfils the language of the text. This witness is maintained in two ways: (1) by creeds; (2) by the maintenance of forms of outward worship.

II. From what has been said we may enter into the full meaning of that article in the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." In what sense is the Church a proper object of belief or faith? Belief has nothing to do with that which is obvious to sight. We do not believe in that which we see. Do you ask what I mean by the words "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"? The answer is, "I believe that Jesus Christ founded, eighteen centuries ago, a Christian kingdom—a city, a community, having certain fixed laws of order and rules of living, a principle of continuity by a ministerial succession—for the purpose of maintaining certain truths and dispensing certain heavenly gifts; that Christ pledged to it His own perpetual presence and superintending providence." This, you perceive at once, is a thing to be received by faith. Get rid of the Divine origin of the Church, make it the creation of man's

policy, or the outgrowth of circumstances, and the mention of it has no business in the Creed. I must refer its beginning to a power not of this earth before it can present itself as an object of my faith.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Sermons on Subjects from the New Testament*, p. 1.

PROFESSION without Ostentation.

I. Much might be said on that mode of witnessing Christ which consists in conforming to His Church. He who simply did what the Church bids him do (if he did no more) would witness a good confession in the world, and one which cannot be hid, and at the same time with very little, if any, personal display.

II. Consider how great a profession, and yet a profession how unconscious and modest, arises from the mere ordinary manner in which any strict Christian lives. Your *life* displays Christ without your intending it. Your words and deeds will show where your treasure is, and your heart.

III. Still it is quite true that there are circumstances under which a Christian is bound openly to express his opinion on religious subjects and matters; and this is the real difficulty—how to do so without display. (1) We must never countenance sin and error. Now the more obvious and modest way of discountenancing evil is by silence, and by separating from it: for example, we are bound to keep aloof from deliberate and open sinners. Such conduct on our part requires no great display, for it is but conforming to the rules of the Church. (2) A more difficult duty is that of passing judgment (as a Christian is often bound to do) on events of the day and public men. This may be done without injury to our Christian gentleness and humbleness, though it is difficult to do it. We need not be angry nor use contentious words, and yet may firmly give our opinion and be zealous towards God in all active good service, and scrupulously and pointedly keep aloof from the bad men whose arts we fear. (3) Another and still more difficult duty is that of personally rebuking those we meet with in the intercourse of life who sin in word or deed, and testifying before them in Christ's name. It is difficult at once to be unassuming and zealous in such cases. Supposing it be clearly our duty to manifest our religious profession in this pointed way before another, in order to do so modestly we must do it kindly and cheerfully, as gently as we can; not making matters worse than they are, or showing our whole Christian stature when we need but put out a hand or give a glance.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 152.

Chap. v., vers. 14-16.

I. "YE are the light of the world." The words are, so to speak, a reflection of a higher and more perfect truth which was to be spoken hereafter by our Lord Himself. "I am," He said, "the Light of the world." There are two different words that in the New Testament are used for light. The one signifies light in itself, shining by its own inherent rays. In this sense the word properly belongs to God. The phrase "Ye are the light of the world" applies to Christians only, because they reflect His light as the moon or the planets shine by the light of the sun, or, to use a more Scriptural metaphor, because Christ is in them, and His light shines through their humanity. Then there is another word applied by our Lord to St. John the Baptist—he was "a burning and a shining light;" and this is a word which signifies artificial light—a light that has to be kindled, a light which is to be applied, and which, before it goes out, has to transmit its flame to others. Now this is the word which properly belongs to us: individuals, nations, and Churches, we are but secondary lights kindled from one source.

II. We do not realize the whole meaning of the words, "Christian knowledge." What is that knowledge which is a necessity and a light to man as man? It is (1) a knowledge of things, (2) a knowledge of man, (3) a knowledge of God. The faith of Christ tinges it with a diviner life, not only in one province, but in all.

III. How is this Christian knowledge to be spread? How is it to be diffused over the whole world? I answer from history, not from theory, that it must be spread from man to man. In order to kindle the light of the Gospel, God became man, and in order to spread it He not only merely gave the word, but He founded a Church. "Ye are the light of the world." From one little centre at Jerusalem that light spread to Jew, to Greek, and to Roman; and every point of light which was formed became a new centre from which the kindling rays spread to others, until, even in this sense, the words of the Son of man flashed like lightning from one end of the earth to the other.

BISHOP BARRY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 49.

I. NOTE, first, the great conception of a Christian man's office which is set forth in that metaphor, "Ye are the light of the world." Christian men individually, and the Christian Church as a whole, shine by derived light. There is but One that is light in Himself. We shall be light if we are in the Lord. It is by union with Jesus Christ that we partake of His illumination.

II. If we are light we shall shine. The nature and property of light is to radiate. It cannot choose but shine; and in like manner the little village perched upon a hill there, glittering and twinkling in the sunlight, cannot choose but be seen. Take the thoughts—(1) All earnest Christian conviction will demand expression; (2) all deep experience of the purifying power of Christ upon character will show itself in conduct.

III. This obligation of giving light is still further enforced by the thought that that was Christ's very purpose in all that He has done with us and for us. The homely figure here implies that *He* has not lighted the lamp to put it under the bushel, but that His purpose in lighting it was that it might give light. God has made us partakers of His grace, and has given it to us to be light in the Lord, for this, among other purposes, that we should impart that light to others.

IV. If you are light, shine. The lighthouse-keeper takes no pains that the ships tossing away out at sea may behold the beam that shines from his lamp, but all that he does is to feed it and tend it. And that is all you and I have to do—tend the light, and not, like cowards, cover it up. Modestly, but yet bravely, carry out your Christianity, and men will see it. Do not be as a dark lantern, burning with the slides down—illuminating nothing and nobody. Live your Christianity, and it will be beheld. And remember, candles are not lit to be looked at. Candles are lit that something else may be seen by them. Men may see God through your words, through your conduct, that never would have beheld Him otherwise, because His beams are too bright for their dim eyes.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 191.

REFERENCES: v. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,109, A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 96; H. P. Liddon, *Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 5; J. C. Hare, *The Mission of the Comforter*, vol. i., p. 181. v. 14-16.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 106; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 241. v. 15.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 187. v. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,594.

**Chap. v., ver. 16.**

TRUE religion a Manifestation.

I. It is the design of God that His true servants should show the world around them what they are, and should not only possess faith, love, and the other fruits of the Spirit within their own hearts, but should manifest their religious character to the world, and let it be seen that they are of such and such

a temper and will, that they have such and such affections and aims and hopes. It was never intended by God that religion and goodness should be a secret locked up in the heart itself, which none should know but the individual himself, and that it should pass from birth to the grave an unseen treasure. It was intended that goodness should be seen, and that the sight of it should inspirit others. It was intended that the minds of others should be raised, and their affections warmed by the sight of it, that thus every good man should spread a circle of light round him.

II. We are intended by God to be witnesses for Him in the world, to bear witness to the truth of religion, to the power and excellence of the Gospel; and on this account it is necessary that our light and good works should shine before men. The greatest testimony which can be given on behalf of Divine truth is the testimony of our own lives. We are bound, then, to give this testimony, and to give it with the purpose that others should see it.

III. This large and animated Gospel view is opposed to a very favourite corrupt notion of the human heart—viz., that a man may be a true Christian and yet a secret Christian; that he may be a Christian by a mere inward feeling and sentiment which he has cherished through life, without any active manifestation of the principle in his course and standard of life; in a word, that a man may be a true Christian, and yet not a witness to Christianity. This is impossible. The Gospel declares that goodness must be visible, must show itself, must be an object for the minds of those around it to rest on, otherwise that there is no real goodness.

J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 212.

The world is in darkness in reference to the highest and most momentous of human interests. Its votaries, indeed, are enlightened enough in all matters pertaining to business or pleasure. But in spiritual things men are in darkness. They do not know God, and though they feel within them the gnawings of a guilty conscience, they know not how that agony may be removed, or how their sins may be forgiven. The Lord Jesus came to dissipate this darkness by revealing God to us, and showing us not only how we may obtain forgiveness, but also how we may attain to His image and become partakers of His nature. Christ is the hidden source of the world's enlightenment; but Christians, united to Him by faith, draw off

from Him that influence by which they are enabled, each in his own place and in his own measure, to dispel some portion of the darkness by which they are surrounded.

I. Note, first, the positive injunction that Christians are to do everything in their power to secure that their light shall shine as brightly as possible. This is to be done (1) by the position we take up. A lamp on the floor will not send its rays so widely out as if it were suspended from the ceiling. So the Christian should connect himself with the Church, and should, not only for the sake of his Master, but also for that of the outlying world, accept any place in the company of the faithful to which he may be called. (2) By the character which we form. The influence that a man exerts depends on his character, even as the fragrance of a flower depends on its nature, or the fruit of a tree on its kind. (3) This injunction is to be obeyed by the exertions which we make for the conversion of our fellow-men.

II. Look at the negative side of the injunction, which requires that we remove everything which tends either to hide or to obscure our light, or which so affects it as to make it suggestive of ourselves rather than of God. That means (1) that we should get rid of the undue reserve by which multitudes are characterized, and which keeps their real character from being as powerful an influence for good as otherwise it might have been. (2) This injunction implies that we should avoid all self-display. The purpose of letting our light shine is that God, not ourselves, may be glorified.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 254.

REFERENCES: v. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 31; W. M. Taylor, *Three Hundred Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 6; E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 266; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 244; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 578, and vol. xxx., p. 120; B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 258; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 382; H. N. Grimley, *The Temple of Humanity and Other Sermons*, p. 145.

Chap. v., ver. 17.—"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

I. A FULFILLER and a destroyer. Let us first clearly understand the difference. (1) Look at it in nature. What is the truly majestic power of the earth? Surely not destruction. There are such forces, but the thought about the world which made those forces seem the venerable and admirable forces, the forces to which men's worship and admiration ought to be given, would be horrible. It is the forces of fulfilment, the

forces which are always crowding every process forward to its full activity, crowding every being and structure out to its completest realization of itself—the forces of construction and growth: these are the real vital forces of the world. (2) Go farther on, and think of what man does to his fellow-men. Your child, your scholar, your servant: you may fulfil him or you may destroy him. There are some men who call out the best of their brethren everywhere. There are men in history whose whole work has been of this sort. There are other men whose whole mission is to destroy. The things which they destroy are bad and ought to be destroyed, but none the less the issue of the work of such men is for disheartening and not for encouragement. (3) Fulfilment of itself involves destruction. The fulfilment of the good involves the destruction of the bad.

II. Note how the method of fulfilment, as distinct from the method of destruction, is, and always has been, distinctively the method of the Christian faith. Christianity from the beginning adopted the method of fulfilment for its own propagation. Christ comes to give us Divine enthusiasms, celestial love. But it is not as strange unnatural things that He would give them. It is as the legitimate possessions of our human nature, as the possessions which, unconscious, undeveloped, are ours already. The kingliness of nature which the human side of the Incarnation declared to be man's possible life, the Divine side of the Incarnation makes to be the actual life of every man who really enters into its power.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 210.

REFERENCES: v. 17.—J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 111; C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 688; R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 388; J. M. Wilson, *Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 356; S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 31; G. S. Barrett, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 8; S. Macnaughten, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 221; H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 94. v. 17-19.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 166; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 52; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 280. v. 17-20.—W. Gresley, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 147; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 3; *Ibid.*, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 203. v. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,660.

Chap. v., ver. 19.—"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."

I. THERE are two instincts implanted by God in the soul as seeds out of which our spiritual life is to grow; one of these

is the instinct of duty, the other is the instinct of love. Throughout the New Testament we are taught that of these two the instinct of love is the greater. The instinct of duty, when it comes to its full strength, thinks first of that great law which governs all the universe, the law of holiness and justice. The instinct of love ever turns its eyes not so much on the law as on the Lawgiver, not on holiness but on God. We constantly make all sorts of allowances for those who show underneath their faults a heart susceptible of real love, the love of God and of Christ. For we know that there are a life and a genial heat in the instinct of love which can work miracles on the soul, and change the man into a new creature.

II. All this is plain enough. But the text, so far from saying that the commandments are of no consequence in comparison with the spirit which rules our life—so far from telling us that if we give our hearts to God all faults and neglects of duty are trifles hardly to be thought of—declares that neglect of even the least commandment lowers a man's rank in the kingdom of heaven. Whatever may be the value of love, duty has still its place, and must not be lightly thrust aside. The fact is, that if duty be not so holy a power as love, yet as long as we remain here we need the strength of duty as much as we do the fire of love. If we compare our characters to our bodies, duty corresponds to the bones, love to the veins, and nerves, and vital organs. Without duty our character becomes weak, loose, inconsistent, and soon degenerates or even perishes for want of orderliness and self-control. Without love our character is a dead skeleton—with all the framework of a living creature, but without the life.

III. Love is higher than duty, just as it is more excellent to worship God than to hold fast by a rule, however excellent that rule may be. But the reason is that love in reality contains duty in itself. Love is duty and something more. If the instinct of love is ever to reach its true perfection, it must absorb the instinct of duty into itself, and make the sense of duty stronger and deeper and keener, and the obedience more careful and more inflexible.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 35.

THE Perilous Harmfulness of Little Sins.

I. Consider the minor violations of the moral law, as they are considered in relation to the Lawgiver Himself. It seems no paradox to say that little sins are peculiarly offending in the

sight of God because they are little; in other words, because we run the risk of offending Him for what, upon our own showing, we care very little about, or which we only expect to yield us a very small and insignificant return. Your little sin sets God at defiance as much as a great one, ignores His authority as much, contradicts His will as much as any violation of the prohibition to murder or to blaspheme; in fact, says, in regard to this one commandment, "God shall not reign over me." We reason so in other things. It would aggravate the venality of a judge that the bribe was so very paltry for which he sullied the purity of his ermine; and we feel that we could more easily have excused the profaneness of Esau, if it had not been that for one morsel of meat he was willing to sell his birthright.

II. Notice next the awful danger of little sins in regard to ourselves; the pernicious effect they must have upon religious character, and the certainty that the least of them, if not renounced, will be large enough to bar us out from the kingdom of heaven. Thus, one effect of the practice we are condemning is, that it maintains and keeps up a habit of sinning, making us so awfully familiar with moral disobedience that all our moral perceptions become blinded, and we forget what an infinite evil sin is. Little ones are sure to draw greater ones after them. With little sins Satan has not much to do, but as the habit of yielding to them gets forward, and a bias towards evil is found to be taking deeper root, he finds something to work upon, and then his advances are cautious, stealthy, alluring us on to greater encroachments upon the law of God by little and little, carefully concealing from us at the beginning what he proposes our end shall be. The yoke of sin must fit itself to the shoulder gradually; conscience must accustom itself to use a sliding and shifting scale of evil; the beginning of sin is "as when one letteth out water."

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,107.

REFERENCE: v. 19.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 145.

Chap. v., ver. 20.—"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It is of the greatest possible importance that we understand, as accurately as we can, what is the nature of that righteousness which God accepts from us. For heaven is only for the righteous; all the promises are to the righteous; it is the

righteous man's prayer that availeth much. Our Lord's description of the righteousness which is required of us is this: it is an "exceeding righteousness;" it is a righteousness in excess of the righteousness of the most scrupulous moralist.

I. A Christian's righteousness exceeds a natural or a Jewish righteousness in this, that it is positive and not negative. It inculcates a certain state of mind, and a particular line of conduct arising out of it. A negative command circumscribes, and therefore always gives a sense of bondage; a positive command has no limit, and is therefore perfect liberty.

II. All other righteousness does the orders of God; this does His will. It is pleasant to do what we are told by one we love; but it is far pleasanter to do what we are not told. And here lies the greater part of a believer's obedience: it is in doing what he knows will please, though it was never laid down.

III. The motive is different. Another man does good, either because he is afraid to do wrong, or because he hopes, by doing good, to obtain a recompense. The Christian has both these feelings, but neither is his actuating motive. His spring is love: he is loved, and he loves back again. It is the love in it which makes the service; and by love the righteousness "exceeds."

IV. And hence two more things result. As the moving power is within, so the righteousness is first an inward righteousness. There is an inner life before the outer one. The outer life is only the reflection of what has been first within—therefore the Christian's righteousness is primarily in his thoughts and affections.

V. And no wonder that such an inner righteousness, when it is brought out, goes very deep and soars very high. It does not calculate how little it may do, but how much it can do, for God; it does not stop at one mile, but is glad to go twain.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 40.

THE Pharisees.

I. Christ's denunciation of the Pharisees is a part of the language of the Gospels which strikes us as very remarkable. The language is part of the judicial language of the first advent. Christ's first advent was not indeed a judgment of the world in a final sense; but it was a judgment in this sense, that it laid the foundations of the final judgment. It was essential for this purpose that a great revelation should be made of human

character, a great disclosure of its disguises and pretences; unmasking the evil in it, and extricating and bringing to light the good. But how was this decision to be made? In no other way than by declaring what was the very structure of morality —that particular virtues are nothing without the general ones. The Gospel was an active religion, and Pharisaism was an active religion too; particular virtues were common to both; but the Gospel was an active religion founded upon love, and Pharisaism was an active religion founded upon egotism. Upon this one fundamental point mankind divided into two parts; the great block split asunder, and our Lord judicially declared and announced this division— the division of mankind upon this law and by this criterion.

II. The condemnation of Pharisaism is prophetic; it was a lesson provided for the world's progress. A civilized world wanted it, because it is the very nature of civilization to amplify the body of public virtues without guarding in the least the motive to them. A Christian world wanted it, because it is the law of goodness to produce hypocrisy; it creates it as naturally as the substance creates the shadow; as the standard of goodness rises the standard of profession must rise too.

J. B. Mozley, *University Sermons*, p. 25.

The scribes and Pharisees represent to us the formalists of all ages, and that in two divisions—the scribes, those who are formalists in their treatment of God's Word; the Pharisees, the formalists in religious life.

I. Note, first, the former class. God gave us His Word to be a light to our feet—to guide, and cheer, and strengthen us in our way. Therefore let all possess the Scriptures; let all study the Scriptures. The more of this knowledge the better. For we are, far too many of us, as the scribes were, with reference to our Bibles. We are stiffened in certain undiscriminating, unintelligent notions, with regard to their sacred contents. We want now, not a Bible apologized for, but a Bible understood; not Gospels harmonized, but Gospels appreciated and loved and yearned over, and lived; the longer the world lasts, the longer the Church lasts, the more thorns grow over the narrow path, the stiffer turns the latch of the strait gate. We want more firmness of hand to grasp the one, more steadiness of step to tread the other; more courage to look on the wounds of our pilgrimage undismayed, and better medicines to heal them. Verily, if the Scriptures are to lead us to life, if they are to testify to Christ,

if they are to carry on the work of the Spirit, then our wisdom in them, our upright dealing with them, our profiting by them, must exceed the righteousness of the scribes among us, or we can in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.

II. Consider the second division of that class whom we are to exceed in righteousness: the formalist in conduct. There has ever been a tyranny of conventionalities in religious practice, and amidst the many blessings of an age of more outward attention to the duties of religion, there is one disadvantage, that this tyranny becomes more widely spread and more rigidly exercised. The whole history of the Church may be described as an alternation of awakenings to the Divine life and relapses into formalism. Our righteousness—our obedience to God, our devotion to Christ by faith (for that is our only righteousness)—must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, of all those who, having the form of godliness, are practically denying the power thereof.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 50.

REFERENCES: v. 20.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 209; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 130; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 51; vol. ix., p. 27; Spurgeon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 169; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 174; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 16; W. M. Taylor, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 20. v. 20-26.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 343; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 9.

Chap. v., vers. 21-26.

THE LAW kept by Love.

I. In dealing with this principle our Lord adduces certain examples by way of illustration, and asserts for Himself a high right and authority to declare to the people the very will of God in this matter. He reminds them of certain things which had been said by "them of old time." Of these sayings some are selected from the Ten Commandments, some from other parts of the Mosaic law, and some apparently from the glosses of the scribes and Pharisees. But no matter with what authority they had been spoken, Jesus claims it as His prerogative to enlarge, or to alter, them by His own authority.

II. The first of the Divine commandments which He handles here, with the view of showing its real spiritual character, is that which concerns the preservation of human life. It had been said by them of old time, and, in fact, by God, "Thou shalt not kill" Christ taught that, in the sight of God, the causeless anger, the cruel scorn, the malignant speech were

all infractions of this law, and would all receive one day their merited and fitting punishment. There might be gradations in the amount of guilt, and all these would doubtless be taken into account, and the penalty rightly adjusted to the crime. But this, at any rate, is certain, the law "Thou shalt not kill" might be broken not merely by the violent invasion of life, but also by the wicked tongue and the cruel thought; and for all these alike God will bring us into judgment.

III. In its true spirit this law can be kept only when we love each other as Christ hath loved us. And if we yield ourselves either to wrathful and bitter thoughts, or to contemptuous and malicious words, our offerings, and prayers, and devotions, and all other our most pious services, in which we seem to delight, shall not be accepted at the throne of grace, shall not obtain the blessing from the God of our salvation, and shall not bring to us the joy which they are meant to bring.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 82.

REFERENCES: v. 21.—H. D. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 154. v. 21, 22.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 301. v. 21-26.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 23; *Ibid.*, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 223. v. 21-32.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 183. v. 23.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 70. v. 23, 24.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 89.

Chap. v., vers. 25, 26.—"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him," etc.

THE literal and the figurative application of this precept are each of them so important that it would be difficult to assign to either a claim upon us more momentous than the other. The moral duty of an equitable adjustment with one who has anything against us, and the spiritual duty of making timely peace with God in respect of anything of which conscience condemns us, are of equal obligation.

I. In giving the principal prominency in this passage to the spiritual meaning we must be careful not to impugn the more secular and homely obligation legible upon the very surface of the words. Nay, we are bound distinctly to declare that they convey to us not only the recommendation, but the peremptory command of Christ, that we be swift in settling disagreements of whatever kind; true and just in all our commercial dealings; and in social differences and estrangements of another kind seeking the blessedness of peacemakers.

II. Our Saviour employs in the text a transaction of secular

familiar life, as a parabolic and impressive method of propounding a most solemn spiritual admonition. He presents to the mind's eye two men, between whom there is a difference. It is obvious that the person addressed is supposed to be in the wrong, and that he knows himself to be in the wrong, and that his adversary has justice on his side. The adversary, the plaintiff, must win the day; unless some timely compromise and adjustment with him can be brought about, the judge must deliver the defaulter over to the officials of the law. How, then, to make agreement with the adversary? By prompt repentance of all that has been amiss. By that kind of repentance which recoils from sin, not only because it is dangerous, but because it is committed against the promptings of conscience, against a heavenly Father. To such a lively repentance as this must be added faith in Christ,—not forgetting that faith in Christ means acceptance of Christ's whole Gospel, not of part of it; not its atoning promises only, but its vigorous calls for exertion; not its future crown only, but if needs be its present cross.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 58.

REFERENCES: v. 25, 26.—C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 247. v. 26.—G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 118. v. 27-32.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 45; *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 245. v. 28.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 103.

### Chap. v., vers. 29, 30.

THIS is one of the texts which the mass of mankind, if they would confess it, feel rather as a blow when they read it. They feel it as a text which it would be disagreeable to them to think much of. They feel disposed to pass it over with the general hope that they will never act contrary to it, avoiding any direct consideration of what it claims from them. The reason is evident.

I. The text suggests the general idea of having to make definite, distinct, and sometimes even sudden and sharp sacrifices for the sake of religion. We like an easy and comfortable prospect before us, as well as a comfortable present; and this prospect, though not actually taken from us, is somewhat modified by this thought, and we feel the solidity and permanency of our world here to be somewhat shaken.

II. But this is not, after all, the main account of the peculiar significance and formidableness of the text; for this reason is mainly connected with the future, and is concerned with possibilities, whereas it is not necessary to go to the future or to

possibilities to discover the peculiar application of the text and the reason of its force. From the wording we see at once that its main bearing is upon the present. "If thy right eye or hand offend thee," it says; that is to say, if they offend thee now, the time is present, the thing to occasion the act, and calling for the treatment, exists now.

III. The text stands in most direct and uncompromising opposition to what is just the most cherished attitude of the human mind toward sin. It tells us not to suppose that we can encourage ourselves in approximations to any special indulgence to which we are drawn, and have none of the sin of it. All such approaches to and tampering with sin are sin, and they enervate and corrupt the mind, destroy its simplicity and singleness, and withdraw it from God.

IV. With respect to the way in which the text must be supposed to operate in ordinary life, (1) the text implies that men have some knowledge of themselves, and observe their own weaknesses and the bad tendencies of their minds. (2) We are to cut off ourselves as strongly and decidedly as possible from all avenues and approaches to our particular sins. We are to keep ourselves carefully out of the way of temptation. The text is in harmony with the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 1.

Chap. v., vers. 33-37.

I. OUR Lord does not here forbid a solemn oath, such as may be required, for example, in a court of justice. The law clearly allowed such an oath for confirmation. When the high priest adjured Jesus by the living God, Jesus found no fault with it. And therefore it seems to me the act, not of an enlightened, but of an over-scrupulous conscience to refuse an oath in such circumstances. Christ does not allude to solemn adjurations, but only to the flippant expletives which were and are so eagerly used, in such a way as to impair the perfect simplicity and veracity of men's souls.

II. Our Lord here obviously forbids all profane swearing. For other sins, it has been said, one may have something to show. But in the case of a profane swearer a man sells his soul absolutely for nought. It is the veriest wilful and wanton outrage of God's law, without advantage to the sinner himself, and most revolting to every well-constituted mind. It is an utterly profitless vice, a degrading of God's good gift of speech,

without reason and without excuse. Therefore, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

III. I apprehend that our Lord's special object here is to insist on His people practising the habit of absolute truthfulness, which will not need any oath to confirm it, and which is apt to be greatly weakened by the use of such language. The needless taking of oaths tends to lessen a man's sense of truth, and enfeeble his regard for it. Men who swear much by heaven or by earth do not regard such oaths as very binding; and once they have accustomed themselves to untruth in this way, bigger and rounder adjurations will be needed, and will be found equally useless, until the whole soul becomes corrupted with that worst of all rottenness—an utterly lying spirit.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 116.

REFERENCES: v. 33-37.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 65; *Ibid.*, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 265. v. 33-48.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 193. v. 34.—J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 146; R. Newton, *Bible Warnings*, p. 334.

Chap. v., ver. 37.

I. A VERY few examples will show us that, as in the case of submission to injury, so in that of abstinence from swearing, our Lord laid down a principle and not a positive precept, and had regard rather to a frame of mind than to definite actions. He Himself, when the high priest adjured Him by the living God to answer his questions, which was a form of putting him on his oath, did not refuse to reply. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that God, "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath," etc.

II. The two great evils into which we are liable to fall when our communication is more than yea and nay, are (1) untruthfulness, and (2) irreverence. Thus we may account for the strength of language in which St. James reiterates the injunction: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not; . . . but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." No one can imagine him to mean that swearing is the greatest offence that we can commit; but if the foundation of the Christian society is mutual trust and confidence, then whatever tends to weaken that confidence or to lower our estimate of truth is *above all things* to be shunned. Let us remember that the two virtues of truthfulness and reverence are closely connected with each other, and are the beginning

and foundation of all Christian faith and holiness. For "every one who is of the truth heareth God's voice;" Christ came into the world to bear witness of the truth. Any Christian profession which does not spring from the love of truth and the fear of God is unworthy of the name it bears; and therefore in reflecting either on our outward life or on our inmost feelings and convictions these are the two principles to which we must ever recur, and which we must pray God to confirm and strengthen in our hearts.

BISHOP COTTON, *Marlborough Sermons*, p. 234.

REFERENCE: v. 37.—Arthur Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 24.

Chap. v., vers. 38-42.

I. THE principle of the Mosaic law—and it is a principle of no little importance in its own place—is that there should be as far as possible a just proportion between the offence and the punishment; that the penalty to be inflicted should neither be too light nor too severe, but that the one should be a fair equivalent for the other. While granting to the full the exceeding wisdom of the Mosaic law on this head, I must add that even in its judicial aspect it by no means comes up to the requirements of the Gospel. There is nothing indeed more beautiful than justice and more Divine. But Christian men, Christian society, Christian legislators, have other duties even to the criminal population besides punishing their offences. It may be necessary, it is necessary, to inflict punishment on the wrong-doer; but it is equally necessary to put away all wrath and revenge, and go to him in the spirit of brotherly love, and heap also coals of fire on his head, to turn him, if possible, to better thoughts and better ways.

II. For the right understanding of what our Lord says here it must be remembered that, while this law properly belonged to the judicial procedure of Israel, it was often applied by the people as a rule of private conduct. Our Lord is here dealing in general with the principle of private revenge, which He is anxious to destroy, because it is most fatal at once to the spiritual and social life of men. But, as usual, He goes for this purpose down into principles of moral duty, which lie far deeper than the precise question on hand; because His object is not merely to prevent a certain evil from being done, but to implant another spirit altogether in our hearts. Therefore He tells them that they are not only not to avenge themselves, but that they are not even to resist evil, but rather to overcome evil with

good. Evil is never overcome with evil, but only with good. Your fire will not put out your neighbour's; rather they will combine and make a double conflagration, his wrong and your wrath together vexing the world.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 131.

REFERENCES: v. 38-42.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 87; *Ibid.*, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 287. v. 39.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,552. v. 39-41.—W. Gresley, *Practical Sermons*, p. 257. v. 39-42.—E. J. Hardy, *Faint, yet Pursuing*, p. 258.

### Chap. v., vers 43-48.

I. OUR Lord does not say here that all men are to be equally dear to us, or equally esteemed by us. He does not substitute a vague principle of universal philanthropy in the room of those special affections which arise either out of kindred or kindness; neither does He teach us to show equal honour to the evil and the good, the just and the unjust. What He means is to assert in all its fulness the law of God, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," and to deny in all its application the corollary of the scribes, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy." He forbids hate altogether, and will not allow it any rightful place in our hearts.

II. The wonderfully simple and effective parable of the Good Samaritan clears up in a moment the whole matter before us; for it teaches us that the offices of neighbourly love are nowise dependent either on the character of him who claims them, or on his treatment of us. It is in a sense natural to hate our enemies; but it is only natural because our better nature has been miserably changed and corrupted. It is the instinct not of true, but of fallen humanity to burn with wrath and return evil for evil.

III. Observe the reasons Christ gives for this law. It is that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, and that ye may be perfect, as your Father is perfect. This is the spirit of Christian perfection, for love is the fulfilling of the law. This is the spirit of the Lord, for God Himself is love. Though there is a peculiar love which clasps in a fond embrace the chosen, redeemed, and believing ones, there is also in God's heart a most pitiful, yearning, compassionate love which does good to all, striving to make them good. People sometimes persuade themselves that, while they should love their own enemies, they ought to hate those who are enemies of God, and no sooner does this idea get a footing

in their thoughts than it spreads and extends its domain, and under covert of a pious duty all malice, hate, and uncharitableness riot in their deceitful hearts. But the Lord's word is most absolute and without qualification. Love is due to all, good and evil, just and unjust; for our duty does not depend on theirs, neither is our spirit to be regulated by theirs.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 146.

REFERENCES: v. 43.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 72. v. 43-45.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 53. v. 43-48.—*Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 188; G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 217; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 111; *Ibid.*, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 311. v. 44.—C. Taylor, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 364. v. 45.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,414; S. Cox, *Expositions*, vol. ii., p. 58; R. W. Dale, *The Evangelical Revival*, p. 193. v. 46.— H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 356. v. 46, 47.—R. W. Dale, *Evangelical Revival*, p. 60. v. 47.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1,029.

Chap. v., ver. 48.—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

IF we are to obey the injunction of the text it is necessary that we have faith in the fact.

I. It is implied in our text, it is taught throughout the New Testament, and it is confirmed by experience, that there is nothing so morally helpful as faith in God. We shall not be surprised at the practical value and the moral effects of faith, if we consider for a moment all that it implies. It implies, first of all, a conviction that the forces of nature are being made to work together for good, under the guidance and control of an intelligent and beneficent will. If so, it is worth our while to strive after perfection. On the Christian view the universe is rationally organized and morally governed, and therefore attempting to act morally and rationally is attempting to bring oneself into harmony with one's surroundings. Whereas, on the atheistic view, since there is no rationality or goodness outside of us, endeavouring to be wise or good is, in reality, going contrary to nature, acting in opposition to the laws of the universe.

II. Faith implies much more than conviction. Belief is not faith. Suppose a man believes in the righteousness and binding force of the Ten Commandments and breaks them all, his belief, so far from making him a good man, is the strongest proof of his unutterable degradation. The faith which St. James says cannot save is the faith of mere belief. The faith which St. Paul says can save is the faith that worketh by love. The

proper synonym for faith is trust, and trust is an affection of the heart, not a faculty of the head. It is the acting out of belief. To have faith in God is to have had one's heart beating in sympathetic unison with God's heart; to have been inspired with the Divine enthusiasm for righteousness; to have felt *one with God* in nature, in sympathy, in aim.

III. Once more, faith implies joy in the present life and hope for the future; and these are states of mind peculiarly conducive to right-doing. The man of faith may be happy amid external disasters,—ay, too happy to do wrong.

A. W. MOMERIE, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 73.

I. THE Sermon on the Mount is often regarded as merely a code of morality, which may be isolated with advantage from the metaphysics of the Christian creed. But if we regard the Sermon on the Mount as merely a moral code we are at once struck by its intense, its impracticable, idealism. "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "Judge not;" "Be ye perfect,"—these and the like commandments, however much they may have been anticipated in India, or practised by Essene recluses, or thought out independently by Stoics here and there, are in too defiant contradiction of the apparent laws of social progress ever to have commanded the assent of the most practical portion of our race, except in the conscious assurance of a superhuman law under the human paradox, a Divine power under the human life. And it is to this assurance that the whole of the Sermon on the Mount appeals. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." It puts before us an absolutely perfect Being as the ultimate standard for our conduct, consecrating all our ideal aspirations, by assuring us that they are not the mere mental fringes of our experience as it fades into unknown space, but justifiable appropriations by anticipation of a reality now outside us, but in time destined to be ours.

II. Christianity not only provides us with an absolute end for conduct, which, as being real, makes our moral ideals speculatively justifiable, but it provides us with an adequate knowledge of that end in the teaching and character and life and death of Jesus Christ—that is, with a *standard* for conduct which, as having been realized in human history, makes our moral ideals practically possible. If the Sermon on the Mount had been and remained a code of ethics, written upon tables of stone, it might have been liable to the charges of inadequacy and exaggeration which have so often been brought against it. But in the face of the life of Jesus Christ it is wilful perversity

to call the Sermon on the Mount exaggerated. In the face of the fruits of His death it is impossible to call it inadequate, or to deny that the gradual amelioration of our servile, our domestic, our social, our political, our intellectual, our moral life was all contained by implication in the precept, "Be ye perfect," and has been wrought out under the influence of the Christian faith in obedience to the Christian sanction.

J. R. ILLINGWORTH, *Oxford Review and Journal*, April 26th, 1883.

I. To whom are the words spoken? They are not meant for all. The words are for His disciples, and for them only.

II. Here is Christ's idea of His holy religion. This is what it is to do for us—it is to make us like God.

III. Holiness is the healthy development of the Divine nature that is within us. It means that in all this round of life we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

M. G. PEARSE, *Thoughts on Holiness*, p. 3, also p. 23.

I. LOOK at the raw material out of which Christ makes His saints. (1) Blessed are the poor in spirit. Begging of Jesus, taking from Jesus, depending on Jesus,—that is the A B C of holiness. (2) Blessed are the meek. This is constantly associated with a willingness to learn. A quiet teachableness is the next mark of the disciple. (3) Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness. God's yearning to give met by my great longing to receive.

II. See where the disciple is found. "His disciples came *unto Him*." We separate the word from Him, and so we lose it. Let this truth sink down into the soul's depths; holiness is all in Jesus, and we can find it nowhere else.

III. The next great step in holiness. On our part it is *the* great step. He who takes this will at once find himself on the high level. Read carefully Matt. v. 13, 14. "Ye are the salt of the earth; . . . ye are the light of the world." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." We are to surrender ourselves to Christ, that this great purpose of His coming shall claim and possess the whole life. We are to live like God, to bless others. "Ye are My disciples," saith the Master,—but not for your own sakes, not that you may be safe and comfortable; but that I, through you, may glorify the Father in blessing and saving others.

M. G. PEARSE, *Thoughts on Holiness*, p 39.

REFERENCES: v. 48.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*. p. 434;

C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 309, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 116; F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 143; G. Butler, *Sermons in Cheltenham College*, p. 215; W. Garrett Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 300. v., vii.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 196; S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 1; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 72.

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**Chap. vi., ver. 1.—"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."**

RUNNING through this chapter are two lines of thought that become one in the deep underlying truth:—

I. The Father's claim. Born of God, we are bound to Him in the deepest, closest, most abiding relationship. This great love of our Father has its claim upon us. His love would have us come close to Him, not as suppliants who knock at the outer door, not as strangers who tarry in the hall and stately courts of the king, but as His children who come right into the inner chamber of the Father's presence (ver. 6). By these claims let us test ourselves and all the conditions of our life. We are the sons of God, and we have no business anywhere or in anything that conflicts with the will of our heavenly Father. Because we are sons of God we are to find in this relationship a power strong enough to order all our life's places for the service and pleasure of our Father. Surely it is not too much to demand that such a relationship, with all its glorious possibilities, should be able to inspire us with a purpose as steady and resolute as that which the student finds in learning, or the merchant in money-making.

II. The soul's supply. Thus our Lord bids us beware of what we may call a natural religious life—a religious life that is born of self and sustained of self, that has no higher source and no other aim. It prays and gives alms and fasts; but all that is only the price it pays for the good opinion of others. It gives its gold to buy men's admiration, and has it; that is its reward. Very different, in all its course, is the life of holiness. It is born of God; we can only receive this life from Him, and we can only retain it by continually receiving—of Him, for Him, to Him, is its ceaseless round. To all life as we know it, derived and dependent, there are the same wants, in plant and in animal, in body and soul—air, warmth, exercise, food, light, society, sleep. There may be a kind of existence without some one or two of these; but the abundant life is only for him who will

secure each. And these are the conditions of that healthy spiritual life which is holiness.

M. G. PEARSE, *Thoughts on Holiness*, p. 89.

REFERENCE: vi. 1.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom* p. 135.

Chap. vi., vers. 1-4.

THE Law kept by Sincerity.

I. It was the custom for great personages—princes and governors and such like—when making high procession through some favoured province, to sound a trumpet before them, and scatter largess of gold and silver, whereby they gained the good will of the poor. Our Lord likens the almsgiving of the Pharisees to this kind of lordly display of munificence. Their alms were never distributed without their taking good care, one way or other, to let the good deed be known, so that they might get honour among men.

II. Note that the guilt of this conduct lay entirely in the spirit which actuated them. Jesus detected that spirit. It was not the publicity of their conduct in itself which He blamed, but the ungodly motive which led to that publicity; and I think it is necessary to bear that in mind, lest we may get in the way of judging others, and judging them unjustly, by the mere external appearance. The really compassionate and liberal man is often put into the front, and obtains a prominence from which he would otherwise gladly shrink; and he gets this position, not with the view of exalting him, but in order that his example may stimulate and encourage others. The difficulty is to reconcile these two things: to avoid all ostentation, and yet at the same time to get all the advantage of generous Christian example.

III. The phrase, "Let not the left hand know what the right hand doeth," is a proverbial expression, implying that our charity is not to be done ostentatiously so as to be seen of men, nor yet self-righteously so that we may pride ourselves upon it. That almsgiving is, and always will be, a duty is plainly involved here. The charity which does not let its left hand know what its right hand doeth is manifestly a spirit of meekness and simplicity, which neither courts the observation of others, nor cares to dwell on its own excellence, but drops its beneficence like dews, in the silence and darkness, so that its presence is known only by the blessing which it leaves behind. But the man who gives an alms, and then settles down in the pride and contentment of his own deed, hath therein his

reward. He has taken all the beauty from his work. It has lost its Divine character as a deed of true pity, and become an act of merest vanity.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 162.

REFERENCES: vi. 1-6, 16-28.—E. Bersier, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 35. vi. 1-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 521.

**Chap. vi., ver. 2.—"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."**

HERE we have—

I. A profound truth about human nature. Man, as man, works, as our Lord calls it, for a reward.

II. A tragic contrast—"their reward." There is another reward than theirs—another and a higher.

III. A judicial sentence which the Divine speaker passes upon some of the men of His time. It is the language of fine irony; it is the language, too, of deep compassion.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 968.

REFERENCES: vi. 2-4.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 153. vi. 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iv., p. 245. vi. 5, 6.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 175.

**Chap. vi., vers. 5-9.**

I. "WHEN thou prayest," the Lord says, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." Neither the synagogues nor the streets were the appointed places of prayer. But a custom had risen, since the days of Daniel the prophet, to pray seven times a day, at certain appointed hours; and when these hours came the Pharisee turned at once to his devotions. Very probably the iniquity of the Pharisee grew up in a very natural way, beginning with a scrupulous but honest observance of religious forms, and gradually sliding into a pretentious and hypocritical display as he found himself a growing object of respect and esteem among men. We also have need to be on our guard, and to watch and pray, and pray and watch, against this snare.

II. Our Lord enjoins that His people, when they pray, should enter into their closet, and shut to the door, and pray to the Father which seeth in secret. The true idea of prayer lies in the shutting of the door. You may make a closet for yourself out of the veriest crowd, provided you shut out the world from your thoughts and lift up your soul to God alone.

III. We are not to be like the heathen, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking. With them prayer was a

kind of bodily and mechanical process, supposed to be efficacious just in proportion to the number of times they could repeat the same cry. Christ says that theirs is not true prayer such as becomes His children, and that we are not to do as they do, for our Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask Him.

IV. When we pray, we should come believing in the unseen Father, and trusting in His gracious disposition. True prayer is just the cry of children to their Father, and it is the childlike feeling of trust in Him which gives to their prayer all its efficacy.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 178.

Chap. vi., ver. 6.—"Enter into thy closet."

I. BY the word "closet" our Saviour is understood to convey an allusion to the room in the ancient Jewish dwelling which was set apart for the office of lonely prayer. Yet as

> "Stone walls do not a prison make,
> Nor iron bars a cage,"

for the soul, neither are they, nor any material boundaries answering to them, essential to make the soul's closet of devotion. Even the Jew who lived in the dullest age of ceremony felt this. "The angel said unto me," writes Esdras, "Go into a field of flowers where no house is builded, and pray unto the Highest continually" (Esdras ii. 25). Abraham found a closet when, arched in the wavering twilight of the grove, "he called upon the name of the Lord." Jesus found a closet when, high up in the tranquil mountain air, the morning star found Him where the evening star left Him, "alone, yet not alone." A closet for the spirit is whatever helps to *close* the spirit in from all distraction, and thus makes it feel alone with God.

II. But the phrase "thy closet" conveys an additional meaning. It means more than mental seclusion in some unexpected place and time. "Thy closet" is the soul's own fixed familiar place of resort for communion with God. It may be hill or hollow, chamber or secret wood-path, or the walk over the sheet of seaside sand—no matter, but it must be *thine own*. The Saviour assumes that each disciple has some such habitual retreat, the shrine of his most blessed recollections, the place where the soul feels most at home, enjoys its Sabbaths, its home of vision, and its walks with God. This is what He means by "*thy closet*."

C. STANFORD, *Family Treasury*, July, 1861.

OUR Lord a Pattern of Private Prayer.

I. Our Lord's example teaches us the great necessity of prayer. The mind of Christ is the mind of heaven, and none ever prayed like Christ. Does not this show most clearly that he who would be ever fit for heaven must begin by learning to delight in his prayers? Ought it not with reason to alarm those to whom prayer is a burden and weariness? It is not only that they lose the blessing they ask—that God will not hear them for that time: their loss is far greater than that; they are living and are like to die, without any practice of that temper which must be practised if they would be happy in heaven.

II. Our Lord's example teaches us the best way of praying, so that one's prayers may be heard. If we knew it no other way, we might be sure from our blessed Lord's pattern that God is never so well pleased with us as when we approach Him with the deepest reverence of heart. This, we may believe, was one reason of His withdrawing Himself—as we read that He did repeatedly—to places where He might be least interrupted, and where He might unreservedly pour out His Divine soul. This made Him fall down in so lowly postures, sometimes kneeling, sometimes lying prostrate. This breathed over all His prayers, of which there are several in the Gospels, that unspeakable mixture of majesty and humility, which no words can describe, but of which surely one effect ought to be to make every Christian man very fearful lest he be found drawing near the High and Holy One with any other than the most serious words and thoughts.

III. One part of this reverence will be, that men will pray to God regularly; not at random, and as it may happen, now performing and now omitting their devotions, just as they may chance to be minded for the time.

IV. Next to regularity in times of prayer, a wise choice of a place to pray in is of no small consequence. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet"—that is, have a set place for prayer.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 71.

HERE is our Saviour's own sanction and blessing vouchsafed to private prayer, in simple, clear, and most gracious words. It is necessary to insist upon the duty of observing private prayer at stated times, because amid the cares and hurry of life men are very apt to neglect it; and it is a much more important duty

than it is generally considered, even by those who perform it. It is important for the two reasons which follow :—

I. It brings religious subjects before the mind in regular course. Prayer through the day is indeed the characteristic of a Christian spirit, but we may be sure that in most cases those who do not pray at stated times in a more solemn and direct manner will never pray well at other times. Stated times of prayer put us in that posture in which we ought ever to be; they urge us forward in a heavenly direction, and then the stream carries us on.

II. Besides tending to produce in us lasting religious impressions, stated private prayer is also a more direct means of gaining from God an answer to our requests. We do not know how it is that prayer receives an answer from God at all. It is strange indeed that weak man should have strength to move God; but it is our privilege to know that we can do so. Now, at stated times, when we gather up our thoughts to pray, and draw out our petitions in an orderly and clear manner, the act of faith is likely to be stronger and more earnest; then we realize more perfectly the presence of that God whom we do not see, and Him on whom once all our sins were laid. Then this world is more out of sight, and we more simply appropriate those blessings which we have but to claim humbly, and they are really ours.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 244.

MORAL Benefits of Private Prayer. Take our Lord's words in the text, and consider how much, according to them, prayer really offered in secret must mean.

I. God "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto." To hold any communication with Him is a work of very great faith. Before you can in earnest think a thought of God, or speak a sincere word to Him, your hearts must be lifted up to a height far above whatever you see and know. He who seriously and sincerely thinks of God when he prays must for the time at least lift up his soul far above all earthly things; and doing this, he must be deeply interested in the high thoughts which come over his soul. He must perceive and feel, for the time, that nothing is truly great but what is immortal, and no being worth living and dying for but Him of whom and by whom are all things.

II. To any considerate person the thought is indeed in-

expressibly awful that, when he prays, he is speaking to the "Father which is in secret." It is made, however, still more awful by reflecting on what our Lord next adds: "Thy Father which seeth *in secret* shall reward thee openly." Although He dwells so high in heaven, yet He continually "humbleth Himself" to behold the things that are in this lower earth. Therefore no devout worshipper need fear that any one of his hearty prayers will be lost. Even if he cannot pray in words, God knows the meaning of his heart, and has ways of setting it all down. On the other hand, a person who, being alone, prays carelessly, cannot plead, with the patriarch Jacob, "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," for by the very act of praying at all he confesses that "God is in this place." Whoever, then, considers at all must behave well at his prayers, and so doing he gives the strongest pledge of behaving well afterwards when his prayers are over, and the grace then asked for is to be tried in active life. The fragrance of the holy offering will continue some little while with him, and dispose him to live in some measure according to his prayers.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 79.

REFERENCES: vi. 6.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 33; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 35; A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 16; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 556; vol. vi., p. 15. vi. 7-15.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 195.

Chap. vi., ver. 9 (with Rom. viii., ver. 15).—"Our Father."

I. I OBSERVE, first, as suggested by the place where we find the words "Our Father," that when we can truly and intelligently call God by this name new life is given to our devotions. It is not without significance that the prayer, so simple in its terms and so wide in its comprehensiveness, which Jesus gave us, both as a model and a form, should begin with these homely words. They bid us pause a moment and definitely realize what God is to us, and in what relationship we stand to Him, before we go forward to present our petitions.

II. When we can truly and intelligently call God our Father new joy is given to the discharge of duty. Duty, considered simply as such, is a cold, stern thing, and needs love to inspire it before it can become joy. Duty thinks mainly of the work to be done; love thinks of the person for whom it is performed. Until, realizing that God is our Father in Jesus Christ, our hearts glow with affection toward Him, every attempt which

we make to do His will must be simply and only an effort to do duty. But when, through faith in Jesus Christ, we get to know and love God as our Father all this is changed. Duty is transfigured into delight.

III. When we can truly and intelligently call God our Father a new significance is given to our earthly trials. Discipline is a privilege that the Father reserves for His own children. All our trials are tokens of our Father's affection.

IV. When we can truly and intelligently call God our Father a new glory is given to our conception of the heavenly world. Jesus teaches us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and so leads us to look upon that land as our home. Home is the centre of the heart, and so, by enabling us to call God our Father and heaven our home, Jesus centres our hearts there, and gives us such an idea of its blessedness that we scarcely think of the outward accessories of its splendour, because of the delight and anticipation that we cherish of being there "at home with the Lord."

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Limitations of Life*, p. 95.

Chap. vi., ver. 9.—**"Our Father which art in heaven."**

THE Hallowed name of Father.

I. There is no greater secret of all truth and holiness and joy than to have correct and grand views of the fatherly relationship and character of God. Therefore, by all strange ways, the enemy of our peace tries to misrepresent it. One method which he uses is this: He will even set forth Christ as a most loving, gentle, attractive Being, that he may, through Him, disparage and distort the Father. "Christ," he says, "came in between the severity of God, the wrath of the Father, and the sinner," concealing that there is no such thing in the whole Bible as the Father's being reconciled to us; but that it was the Father's own pre-ordaining love which planned and executed the whole scheme, whereby we are reconciled to Him.

II. God has made the father His metaphor. It is the strictest and most beautiful of all the metaphors of that great One who can only be spoken of by metaphors. (1) A father's love must of necessity precede the love of the child; long before the child can really know or love him, he has known and loved the child. The child's love is the response and echo after long intervals. You cannot conceive the time when God began to love you; but you can easily date almost the hour when you began to love Him. (2) Just as a father, being a

man, trains his child for manhood, so God, being eternal, trains His creatures for eternity. You can only read a father's love in that light. It is always prospective love. Mysterious—just because God sees a future which His child does not see.

III. A father's love is a very wide thing. It takes in with a large embrace all the little things and all the great things in his child's life—all and everything.

IV. A father's love never dies. Whatever the child may do, whatever the father may be constrained to do, upon whatever his child does, it does not alter a father's love. He may punish, he may be angry, he may hide himself; but his love is unchanging. In this his relation approaches and assimilates to God's relation to His creatures.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 8th series, p. 29.

THE Spirit of this Invocation is the Spirit of Faith.

I. Consider the filial spirit of the believer. (1) The filial spirit is a childlike spirit. In receiving the spirit of adoption we are not only admitted into the family of God, but we are converted and become as little children. (*a*) A child is earnest; (*b*) a child is unsuspicious and frank; (*c*) a child submits to discipline in faith. (2) The filial spirit is a spirit of dignity and perfection. There is not merely a filial relation, there is also a filial resemblance. The filial spirit is the spirit of perfection. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." To resemble God, to walk worthy of Him, to be conformed to the image of Christ the Elder Brother, to be filled with the Spirit,—this is the aim and the standard of the spiritual life.

II. The spirit of the invocation is the spirit of love. "Our" is a word of love; its character is Pentecostal, for Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. The new covenant is now established, and God has a people who dwell in Him and He in them. (1) "Our" we say, for, belonging unto Christ the Head, we belong unto all, we are debtors to all, and servants of the brethren for Christ's sake. (2) Honouring and loving all men, let us cultivate especially fellowship with the saints. (3) We must be very near to God if we wish to get near our brother's heart. (4) Love is the soul of communion; and love means self-sacrifice.

III. The spirit of the invocation is the spirit of hope. "Our Father which art in heaven." The child asks, "*Where* is heaven?" The thought of riper years asks, "*What* is

heaven?" Yet the child's question is true and deep; unless we view heaven as a reality, our thought of heaven as a state will become vague and unreal. Heaven is a place, and not merely a state. Philosophy may think it more rational and spiritual to suppose that, as God is in every place, He is in no place more than another. Scripture maintains most emphatically the omnipresence of God and the spiritual character of worship, and yet as distinctly teaches that there is a heavenly sanctuary, a throne of grace, the dwelling-place of the Most High. We regard heaven, (1) as the place where Christ now lives; (2) we remember that all spiritual blessings are treasured up for us in heaven.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 95.

Chap. vi., ver. 9.—"Hallowed be Thy name."

GOD is the proper subject of our first desires in prayer,—God in all, and in ourselves as parts of all: if He is served by men, we, who take our stamp and our habits from the age in which He places us, shall serve Him better also; if His will is done here as it is in heaven, we, who are here, shall bear our part in doing that will. And so we pray first for these wider blessings, these which will bring others in their train, and the very desiring of which draws our thoughts to their right aim and object, and divests us of all mere selfish regards. And among them stands foremost this petition: "Hallowed be Thy name."

I. What is *Thy name?* The name of God in Scripture signifies that revelation of Himself which He has made to His creatures; that preached and written and recorded character of God which at the age in which men live He has been pleased to manifest to our race. Thus, when we say, "Hallowed be Thy name," we mean, "May that revelation of Thyself which Thou hast made in Thy Son Jesus Christ be hallowed."

II. And how *hallowed?* Not made holy; this it needs not. When we say, Let Thy name be "held holy," we mean, Let Thy revelation of Thyself, as a reconciled Father in Christ, be known and appreciated by men as belonging to and penetrating their character and hopes, in a way in which the ungodly world can never know nor appreciate it; let all men be put in possession of its secret, and make it to themselves the highest reality of their being. It is indeed a missionary prayer in the highest sense; for to this end all the labours of the Church and ministry tend, and when this is so, then will Christ's

kingdom have come, and God's will be done, in the very highest and most blessed degree.

III. But he who prays for all includes also himself. God's name should be hallowed in and by us, (1) in our thoughts, (2) in our conversation.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 149.

I. WHAT is meant by the name of God? (1) God has revealed His name in creation; He has written it on our heart and conscience. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." The things that are made declare His eternal power and Godhead. The conscience also beareth witness, and thoughts within us could not accuse, did they not know justice and purity, love and truth. (2) God revealed His name to Israel. He revealed it (*a*) by special revelations, (*b*) in the history of the nation, (*c*) in His law. (3) Christ, the Word of God, is the name. And having received Christ the name, the next commandment is to hallow the name.

II. "Hallowed be Thy name." What is meant by the name of God being hallowed? The petition implies: (1) The desire to know God's name. The name of God is now simple—the highest, deepest, most comprehensive name, the name above every name, even Jesus. To hallow the name of God is to look unto Christ. (2) To hallow the name of God is to treat it as a reality—to remember God is what He calls Himself. (3) To hallow the name of God is to rejoice in it. The more we know of God, the more comprehensive is our view of Christ; the more many-sided our conception and experience of God's attributes and works, the greater will be our joy in His name. (4) To hallow God's name is to keep it separate, distinct from our own opinions, and the corrupt thoughts and desires of the heart. (5) To hallow God's name means not to divide the name of God, but to regard it as one, sacred and inviolable in its unity. (6) To hallow God's name is to live and walk in Christ, as the Apostle Paul speaks of his ways which are in Christ Jesus. (7) To hallow God's name means that we ourselves should be manifestations of God, reflecting His image, showing forth His will, resembling His character. Christ was the name of the Father sent by Him into the world; even thus are we called by Christ's name and sent by Him, that the world may see in us His love and spirit.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 125.

**Chap. vi., ver. 9.—"Our Father, . . . Hallowed be Thy name."**

THIS petition evidently involves a request—

I. That the glory of God may be revealed. God's name cannot be hallowed until it is known, and it must be told us before it can be known. Our want of reverence springs partly from our ignorance. To see God at once leads to service and love. We do not know God's name. Bits of it we can make out. Something of His power we can read in nature; something of His wisdom; something of His general kindliness. And these we put in, rightly enough, as part of His great name. But the rest of His name is obscure. To know God is no light blessing, but is the great one which takes precedence of all others. (1) To see God is a converting and quickening experience; (2) and as all sanctity depends on it, so all consolation flows from it. Therefore, in the foreground of all your petitions put the prayer for God's revelation of Himself, and present and urge it until in richest fulness the answer comes to your heart.

II. This petition prays for a reverent use of all the knowledge of God that comes to us. We can abuse all things, even the mercy and the truth of God. And it is possible for the name of God to be imparted to us in some degree, and yet for us to lose all the service it was meant to render. We have, therefore, to pray that the revelation of God may meet with reverence from us and others, that every result which God's disclosure of Himself ought to have on us may be realized. If you analyze the general idea of hallowing God's self-revelation, you will find it to contain various qualities of gracious character. (1) The prayer for power to hallow God's name is a prayer for faith; (2) it is a prayer for obedience as well; (3) it is a prayer for zeal for God's glory; (4) it asks for a worthy estimate of man. It is thus no formal petition and no mere doxology, no compliment merely, or word of homage. It is a great prayer—man's darkness begging light, and man's weakness begging strength.

R. GLOVER, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 7.

I. GOD is our Father (1) by creation; (2) by regeneration; (3) by adoption.

II. The petition "Hallowed be Thy name" relates to what is called "declarative glory"—a prayer that God's name may be made known, and honoured by all His creatures. The desire that God's name may be hallowed implies—(1) that we have a just sense of His majesty and holiness; (2) it is a prayer that all people may learn to love and obey that gracious

Father in whose service we find such freedom and delight; (3) it should remind us of the various ways in which our heavenly Father is treated with disrespect and contempt.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 59.

THE Messianic Kingdom.

I. Who is the King? In one sense the King is God the Father. It is to "our Father in heaven" that the petition is addressed, "Thy kingdom come." His glory, His self-manifestation, is the one great purpose of God, and His is the kingdom, for of Him and to Him are all things. But the Father has appointed Jesus His Son to be the King, even as Christ is the Vine, while the Father is the Husbandman. Christ was appointed from eternity to be King, (1) as the Son of man; (2) as the Son of David; (3) as the Son of man and of David after His humiliation, suffering, and death. The Son of God became man, not merely to suffer and to die, but to reign. He took upon Him our nature, that through suffering He might enter into glory; as man, even as the Lord, whom they have pierced, He is to reign in righteousness and peace, the glory of Israel as well as the light to lighten the Gentiles.

II. When will the kingdom be established? It is to be brought about not gradually, but suddenly; not without observation, as is the kingdom of grace in the heart, but with great and mighty signs. The essential features of the kingdom are: Satan bound, the earth renewed, Israel converted and restored, the Church glorified, and Antichrist judged and vanquished; and the crisis, the turning-point, to bring about these changes, is one—it is the direct interference of God, the appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

III. The character of this kingdom. (1) In manifested power on earth. The kingdom is to be on earth. Christ and the glorified saints reign over Israel and the nations. Jerusalem is the centre of the world; the land of Israel is restored to wonderful fertility and blessedness. (2) It is spiritual. It is a kingdom of grace, in which spiritual obedience is offered, and in which men worship God with renewed and sanctified hearts. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah. The eternal principles of righteousness and love which were embodied in the Mosaic law will then reign upon earth in the spirit of liberty and power.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 173.

REFERENCES: vi. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 213; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 45; G. W. McCree.

*Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 216; J. A. Spurgeon, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 209; A. P. Peabody, *Ibid.*, pp. 289, 309; P. J. Turquand, *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 344; M. Dods, *The Prayer that Teaches to Pray*, p. 25; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 303; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 349; F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 1, 13; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 34; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 409; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, pp. 396, 408; J. M. McCulloch, *Sermons*, p. 60; A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 24.

**Chap. vi., vers. 9, 10.—"Our Father, . . . Thy kingdom come."**

I. Mark the force of this petition. (1) Simultaneously with our discernment of the Redeemer's right to rule us, there is the regretful discovery made that we have withheld our hearts, and our fellow-men have withheld their hearts, from this gracious sovereignty. Recognizing this successively, we long that He would establish and extend His kingdom in our heart. (2) We pray also for the establishment and extension of Christ's kingdom amongst men. His kingdom is not a secret sovereignty over individual hearts alone, but an empire over the united commonwealth of the Christian Church. A common allegiance to the Redeemer has created the great brotherhood of the Church of Christ. And that Church, united in faith, love, hope, duty, is the Saviour's kingdom. And as the devout heart feels that for itself the establishment and extension of the Saviour's secret kingdom within is the thing supremely to be desired, so it feels that for the world the establishment and extension of the Saviour's kingdom in it is the thing most earnestly to be sought. Those who do not pray see not the glory of the Church, nor the essential service she has rendered and can render to mankind.

II. Consider the duty of offering this petition more earnestly. Who is there that offers it daily, as he is in the habit of asking for daily bread? Is it not the case that even the devoutest desire almost everything about Jesus Christ more than His sovereignty? We want His comfort, we want His teaching, we want His promises, we want His protection, we want His support. But His rule, His command, how many of us are there that put that first and foremost before daily bread? It is vain for us to ask for mercy, and joy, and assurance, and rapture, and heaven, and not give ourselves up to be moulded, inspired, enlarged, guided by God. And therefore this petition of surrender is the salt of the whole, that which makes all the others answerable. We wish to be useful, and feel that the only value

in life is usefulness. We shall be useful only in the degree in which our obedience to the Saviour is a living and continuous thing.

R. GLOVER, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 30.

Chap. vi., vers. 9, 10.—"Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

THE comprehensive scope and intercessory character of the three petitions. The spirit of a Christian drawing near unto God is a royal spirit. He asks great things for himself and for others.

I. For himself. It is written, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." And one of the errors of our prayer may be, that our aim is not high enough—that in coming to a King, whose delight is to be bountiful, we do not bring with us a royal spirit and large desires, but a contracted spirit and limited petitions. (1) High ought to be our thoughts of acceptance and favour in the sight of God. The very light of God's countenance is our aim. And as every repentant and believing sinner is at liberty immediately to pass out of the cold—the Arctic regions of the law, with its condemnation—into the sunny paradise of this infinite love, those who have believed are still further assured of their perfect blessedness. (2) Peace is thus ours. Only those who know the God of Peace know the peace of God. Only those who know that Christ is our Peace understand fully what He means when He says, "My peace I give unto you." (3) And do we seek joy in God? It is written, "Thou wilt make them joyful in Thy house of prayer." Christ's joy is to be in us. Perfect love of God, perfect peace of God, perfect joy of God,—such are royal thoughts and petitions.

II. For others. Prayer in the name of Christ must needs be prayer for the manifestation of God's glory in the good of man. Intercession is the distinguishing mark of the Christian. The penitent, the inquirer, pray for their own personal safety. The accepted believer prays for others as well as himself; he prays for the Church and for the world. It is in intercession that the Christian most fully enters into his glorious liberty. He fulfils the measure of prayer, for Christ and the Church are one.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 235.

1. CONSIDER the exact meaning of this petition. Resist God as we will, we and all our actions will yet be included in the

sweep of some Divine plan, and everything we do, even our evil, be made contributive to some gracious results. But if instead of resisting Him we fall in with His desires—become workers together with Him—then the *Fatherly plan*, fullest of mercy and of love, is realized. If we be plastic to His touch, He moulds us into vessels of honour; if crude and unyielding, it is still He that is the Potter, and we are still moulded on His wheel, but He can only fashion us into some vessel of less honourable use. In this prayer we recognize that God's will may, through our dulness or waywardness, fail of its accomplishment; and so, for ourselves, our friends, and for mankind at large, we pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

II. Consider the consolation suggested by the petition. Perplexed with the entanglements and burdened with the responsibilities of life, this word comes to us with the sustaining thought that, while we are unable to plan it aright, God has planned it for us; that in the Divine mind there is an ideal plan which embraces every object at which we should aim—the perfecting of our being, our daily protection, the averting of all injury to our essential being, our present and our eternal joy. To the thoughtless this consolation may seem slight; to the thoughtful it will appear supreme.

III. Consider the wisdom of adopting this petition as our own. All who can realize that God will take the trouble to plan our life for us will at once admit that the wisest course we can adopt is to pray and labour that His plan may be carried out. And the more we think of it, the more we see the wisdom of praying that it may be so. For (1) we have not in ourselves either the knowledge or experience which would permit us even to plan with wisdom our outward and earthly lot. (2) Little as we can guess what would be best for us here, still less can we guess what course and what experiences of life would most secure our well-being in the life to come. When we wake to the sense of our immortality, and are moved by the gracious solicitude which it awakens, the first and last action of instinctive wisdom is to commit the whole ordering of our life to God, and to say, "Thy will be done."

R. GLOVER, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 45.

REFERENCES: vi. 9, 10.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 515; R. Glover, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 280; W. H. Dallinger, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 125; C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and other Sermons*, p. 357; *Ibid.*, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 130.

Chap. vi., vers. 9-11 (with Matt. vii., ver. 7; 1 Thess. v., vers. 17, 18; James iv., ver. 3; James v., ver. 16).

A QUESTION about which there has been a good deal of discussion of late years is the question of prayer. Are our prayers answered? If so, if we admit in general the efficacy of prayer, what ought we to pray for? Should we confine our prayers to petitions for spiritual benefits? or may we also ask for temporal blessings?

I. I suppose no one will deny that there are no prayers more right and more natural than those offered by one who is himself sick, and by his friends on his behalf, that he may receive the blessings of patience, resignation, and cheerfulness; and yet we know that it is universally agreed that a state of mind marked by these virtues is conducive to the recovery of the patient. And even in other cases, where the effect on the material by answer to prayer for spiritual blessings is less obvious, it still seems to be equally real, even though our petition be directed to an object which appears to be far removed from the material world.

II. We hold that prayer can affect the physical world. We do not hold that to each prayer, regarded by itself, without respect to all its surroundings and to all its consequences, there is a certain answer. The answer is what God sees to be best, is in perfect accordance with His will. We believe that every prayer has some answer—an answer in the shape of a blessing or a curse, according as it is the prayer of faith or by lack of belief in the petitioner is little better than a mocking of God. We believe that some prayers are specially answered in the way desired; that if so, it is not that God's will is altered, but because the prayer and its answer are completely in accord with that will.

III. This is our faith. To render it tenable, it is no way essential that we should be able to quote specific instances of the definite answer of prayer. We are here distinctly in the region of faith; it is sufficient if we show that there is nothing in God's ordering of the universe inconsistent with our belief. If we once accept it, we are left to the guidance of revelation alone; and this speaks to us with no hesitating voice: "Ask, and it shall be given you;" "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working."

A. J. C. ALLEN, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, April 24th, 1884.

**Chap. vi., vers. 9, 11.—"Our Father, . . . Give us this day our daily bread."**

NOTE: I. The force of this petition. (1) This prayer constrains us to forego all bread but that which God gives. We can get bread from one or other of two deities: the god of this world will give it us, or our Father in heaven. When we say, "Our Father in heaven, give us daily bread," we turn our back on the other giver of bread, on all evil ways of making a living or augmenting our fortune, and ask only such comforts of God's providence as can come to us in an honourable way. (2) This petition requires us, next, to put away all greed, ambition, and anxiety. For it asks only "bread"—nay, only to-day's bread. Enough to sustain, not enough to pamper us. Enough for comfort, not enough for display. Enough to free us from needless care, not enough to free us from wholesome dependence upon God. (3) Let us remember in our prayers and in our actions the needs of others besides ourselves. In all this prayer the plural number is prescribed. We have to come always thinking of others, and naming their wants with our own. (4) The prayer requires us to recognize that God is a great Giver of all good. The great Father lays up for the children. He opens His hands, and all things are full of good. Just below the surface and behind the appearance of things God is at work, and all good that comes to us comes from Him.

II. Some reasons for offering this petition. (1) The adoption of this prayer will give us peace. Not, indeed, all peace; but peace from worldly anxiety and from innumerable disturbances of the heart. (2) The adoption of this petition will hallow all our life. For the largest part of the work of all men is directed to the getting of the means of living; and if in the pursuit of our trade this gracious prayer moderates all selfishness, destroys all greed, and brightens with the smile of God all our activities, it will be found that the whole of life is somehow graciously affected by the one petition. (3) The use of this prayer will vastly enlarge our knowledge of God.

R. GLOVER, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 60.

**Chap. vi., vers. 9, 12.—"Our Father, . . . Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."**

I. THE request. (1) We are in debt to God. We have only to listen to the voice of conscience to admit this at once. For amongst the deepest of all our instincts is the sense of responsibility—a feeling that some things are *due* from us.

(2) The Saviour's word, assuming the guilt of sin, proclaims at the same time the possibility of its pardon. How sweet is the suggestion of this word that forgiveness is granted to those who seek it! For forgiveness is a great word. It means forth-giving —that is, the absolute dismissal and sending away of that which we acknowledge. This precept assumes the cross which is to follow, on which, owning the sin of men, sharing its curse and praying for its pardon, Christ makes propitiation for the sins of the world. It teaches us that "without money and without price" this most needed and richest of all gifts is to be obtained.

II. The clause which is added to the petition, "As we forgive our debtors." The Saviour does not take away with one hand what He gives with the other, and the addition of this clause does not proceed from any desire to limit the outflow of pardoning grace. He wants, on the contrary, to get the hearts of all who offer this petition into the mood which shall be most receptive of God's infinite gift. Observe: (1) A certain fitness to use and profit by God's blessings is uniformly a condition of their bestowment. Common mercies may be bestowed irrespective of spiritual character. But all His higher gifts are bestowed where they are welcomed, enjoyed, improved—where they will be productive of some Divine result. (2) Penitence is the condition of heart to which alone God can impart forgiveness. (3) Wherever there is repentance it is easy to forgive our debtors. When the spirit of all grace has touched us, and our soul has become tenderly sensitive to the greatness of its Saviour, regardful of the claims of man, and obedient to the promptings of its own higher life, then humility beholds no fault equal to its own; and the heart, purged of its selfishness by its contrition, pities those who have injured it, and so penitence easily pardons every fault by which it has been injured.

R. GLOVER, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 74.

### Chap. vi., ver. 10.—"Thy kingdom come."

THE Kingdom of Grace within us.

I. If the kingdom has to come to us, we must be by nature outside of it. This petition reminds us, then, of the fall and its consequences. True, the kingdom of God is around us; the light shineth into the darkness; love seeks the banished ones, even the rebellious; but the place whence this petition now is offered is a province fallen from the King. It is the longing of the soul that God would visit and redeem us.

II. We cannot go to the kingdom; it must come to us.

"Come unto us the peace of Thy dominion,
For unto it we cannot of ourselves,
If it come not, with all our intellect."

When we feel the desire to be restored to God, it is natural that we should think of returning to God, and we hope that, after a long journey, we may reach the kingdom. Prayer, good works, piety, we imagine to be the road to God. But we cannot thus go to the kingdom; it must come to us. The door is before the narrow way, and the door is very nigh unto us—even Jesus Christ, crucified for sinners.

III. Father, Son, and Spirit bring with them righteousness, peace, and joy. Every kingdom is based on righteousness; the condition and manifestation of its prosperity is peace; the crown and fulness of peace is joy.

IV. In this kingdom there is greatness or dignity and liberty. Humility is the dignity of the kingdom; obedience is its liberty.

V. Think now of the extent and the comprehensiveness of the kingdom. The kingdom of grace in the individual is to be all comprehensive. Having its centre in the heart (out of which are the issues of life), it is to extend to all our desires, thoughts, words, and notions. All that we are and have belong to God, and that always.

VI. The character of this kingdom as long as we are on the earth is antagonistic. It is in opposition to sin within and around us. The more we seek to follow and serve God, the more clearly and painfully we become conscious of the evil of our heart, of our unbelief and worldliness. It is not yet the time for rest, for exclusive praise and thanksgiving, for unmingled joy; but the time of warfare, of prayer and fasting, of manifold temptations. The Solomonic reign has not yet commenced. It is the period of David, of exile and wandering, of humility and patience, of danger and of struggle.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 153.

IN these words themselves it is revealed that the kingdom is an actual thing future, not a metaphorical thing present; a thing to be brought in, completed, as a new state, not any increase of Gospel blessings in the present state. What do we know from Scripture of such a kingdom?

I. It was prefigured by the constitution of God's people Israel under Himself as their King. They were a chosen people, and

He dwelt in the midst of them, ruling them and upholding them. We find allusions to it in the writings of David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Scripture testimonies show that we are to look for a kingdom of Christ, not as a spiritual figure, but as a matter of fact to be accomplished in the future; a kingdom closely associated with His coming again to us; a kingdom wherein His saints shall reign with Him; a kingdom to be established over and in this earth of ours, wherein it, being fully rescued from sin and the curse, will be completely subject to its rightful Lord and Redeemer. It is of that kingdom that our Lord Jesus taught us to say, "Thy kingdom come."

II. Let us now trace a few of its characteristics. (1) It is a kingdom of peace and love. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain;" "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (2) It is a kingdom of purity. Only the pure in heart shall see God. And if we search deeper for this purity of heart, we shall find that it can spring but from one source—the new birth by the Holy Spirit. (3) It is a kingdom whose very glory and chief attribute it is that Christ is present and ruling in it. (4) Again, it is a kingdom of joy; and those who pray for its coming hope and yearn for the blessedness of its approach. The joy of their hearts is not here, but hidden with Christ, and waiting its manifestation with Him. (5) This kingdom is a kingdom of hope, and we are prisoners of hope, and all who really pray for it hope for it. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 230.

WHAT do we mean when we say to God, "Thy kingdom come"? And is the wishing or praying enough? or if we wish and pray, is there aught besides which we ought to do?

I. To wish from the heart and pray with the whole soul are enough, if there is nothing else for us to do. But all prayer to God implies that we act as we pray. God wills to knit in one His own work and ours. He wills so to unite His creatures with Himself that He would bring about His own work through them. He willed to allow His kingdom to shine out or to be darkened, to widen or to be narrowed; to enfold the known world, or to be hemmed in and struggle, as it were, almost for life. All these changes and ebbs and flows of His grace He allowed to be as man was faithful or disobedient to His will. So is it as to His threefold kingdom, whereby God rules in the souls where He

dwells. He wills so to employ us, His creatures, in His work of love, that through us His kingdom should come in the single soul, through us should His kingdom throughout the whole world be enlarged, through us should the kingdom of His everlasting glory be hastened.

II. God's condescension involves our corresponding duty. He wills that through the power of His grace, and for the merits of our crucified Lord, which alone make us acceptable to Him, by aid of man accepted in Him, man should be brought to the knowledge of Him, and should be saved. He wills that through the merits of His all-holy thoughts, words, and deeds, our words and deeds, wrought and spoken through His grace, should reach, affect, win to Him our fellow-sinners. May none of us be slothful servants, saying listlessly, "Thy kingdom come," yet acting as if we cared for nothing less. But may God give us grace so to use faithfully what He has for this short time entrusted to us, that we may see in that day with joy those whom our prayers, our alms, our words, our deeds, our lives, have helped to love our God.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 43.

I. CHRIST'S kingdom on the earth may be divided into three parts —nature, providence, grace. And the kingdom of grace, again, is triple. There is the kingdom in our own hearts, there is the kingdom over the earth, and there is the kingdom of the glory of the Second Advent. We are praying for all three.

II. Our great work is evangelization. More we cannot do. We cannot convert, but we can evangelize. We can make Christ known to every inhabitant of this earth. The rest is with God. Missionary work is not like other work—mere natural cause and effect. It is on a much higher level. It is different from all ordinary undertakings. It is Christ's own power, to do Christ's own work, for Christ's own glory. It is a King—the King of kings—asserting His right and taking His kingdom. He has purchased it; He has predestinated it; He has done it. We are working with promises; we are co-operating with faith; we are leaning on majesty; we are allied to omnipotence.

III. Our Lord's own prayer and directions give us clear instructions for what we are chiefly to pray. (1) For union of the Church, as the highest testimony and the truest sermon in the whole world: "That they all may be one," etc. (2) For increase of missionaries. His prescient eyes foresaw the

universal difficulty which there would be in every age—not of openings, not of money, but of *men*. (3) For grace to give power to truth: "Sanctify them through Thy truth." (4) The far end: "Glorify Thy name." (5) Nearness to that end: "Thy kingdom come."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 141.

I. THE kingdom of God, though not a temporal one, is a real one. The language of the Bible cannot be explained away as simple metaphor.

II. The kingdom for whose advancement we so often pray is a peaceable kingdom, and one which is constituted in the very person of the King Himself.

III. The kingdom of our blessed Lord, for whose prosperity we are permitted to pray and labour and endure, admits of unlimited extension throughout the world.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 67.

Chap. vi., ver. 10.—"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

I. *As it is in heaven.* The nature and manner of heavenly employments are not precisely known to us. But of some of the qualities of that perfect doing of God's will we can treat from what we know of ourselves, who, a little lower than the angels, are, like them, beings with reason and affections and spiritual life before God. And we may observe (1) that their doing of God's will is without selfishness. No idol set up within interferes with the proper aim and end of action. (2) Again, their conformity to God's will is all real and genuine—the act first of the heart and of affections and desires, then of the tongue and outward bearing. (3) Their work is done without intermission or weariness. They cease not day nor night.

II. Man's glory is to suffer. In this sense let us consider the words, "Thy will be done." Let us regard them as expressing the intelligent resignation, on the part of an imperfect and erring being, of his ways and his prospects, into the hand of an almighty and merciful Father. And thus viewed they imply: (1) A knowledge of the relation between God and himself. God is to him a Father watching over him, careful and solicitous for his welfare. Hitherto He has done well for His people; He has not forsaken them that trust in Him. The most adverse circumstances have in the end proved for their good; God has led them by a way that they knew not. All this dwells on the Christian's mind, and from such evidence as this, strengthened by

his own spiritual experience that the Lord is gracious, he learns to trust Him, and to say respecting Himself, "Thy will be done." (2) "Thy will be done." And what if that will be not only afflictive, but dark and mysterious also? What if God be pleased to wound just when we believed we wanted cherishing? What He does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. I remember, on a glorious day of all but cloudless sunshine, passing in view of a well-known line of bare and majestic downs, then basking in the full beams of noon. But on one face of the hill rested a mass of deep and gloomy shadow. On searching for its cause, I at length discovered one little speck of cloud, bright as light, floating in the clear blue above. This it was which cast on the hill-side that ample track of gloom. And what I saw was an image of Christian sorrow. Dark and cheerless often as it is, and unaccountable as it passes over our earthly path, in heaven its token shall be found; and it shall be known to have been but as a shadow of His brightness whose name is Love.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 134.

LET us view this petition—

I. As a description of the kingdom of Christ. When Christ comes to reign earth will rejoice. Israel, renewed by the Spirit, and gifted in the richest measure with humility and fervent zeal, will be the first-born among the nations; and then the Saviour's saying, "Salvation is of the Jews," will find its perfect fulfilment. When the Holy Ghost shall write the law of God in their hearts, then shall be seen the spectacle of a righteous nation; and, imitating them, all kingdoms shall conform themselves to the will of our Father in heaven.

II. As a description of the angelic obedience, the standard and pattern of ours. To do God's will is the delight of angels, and His will is His self-manifestation on earth. Angels are interested in the earth that God may be glorified, even as Satan and his servants are interested in it to retard the progress of God's kingdom and to obscure His glory. The obedience of angels is in humility and perfect submission. They obey because God commands. Thus ought we to accustom and train our hearts to reverential obedience.

III. As pointing to the Lord Jesus, the ladder between heaven and earth, in and by whom this petition is fulfilled. The Son of God has become the Author of eternal salvation to all believers. By His obedience we are constituted righteous.

By His sacrifice we have gained the position of children. In Him we are reconciled and renewed; one with Him, we receive the Father's love and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and thus—

IV. God's will is done in us and by us. When we think of the will of God, our hearts are at peace. The secret will of God is a mystery, into which it is not for us to search; but we know that, while clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. We see His revealed will in the gift of Christ and the Spirit. We know this is the will of God, that all who believe in Jesus should have eternal life, and that He should raise them at the last day. This also is His will, even our sanctification, that Christ by the Spirit should dwell and live in us, and that, in union with the true Vine, we should bring forth fruit.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 203.

THE Obedience of Angels.

I. An angel, by his very nature, is a servant doing God's behest. It is laid upon him; it is a necessity and law of his being. With us service is too much an occasional thing—put on at times; done and left. It must not be so if you are to be like an angel. It must be an essential part of every moment of life—reality; the sum and substance, the whole of your existence; continuous, obedient service.

II. The angels behold the face of the Father, and hence their power and their joy. They go wherever they go straight from the immediate presence of God. So they carry their sunshine; so they carry their might; so must you.

III. And no one can doubt that an angel's obedience is the obedience of a happy being. You will not do much, you will not even obey well, till you are happy.

IV. It matters nothing to an angel what the work is which is given him to do. It may be for a babe, or it may be for a king; it may be for one, or it may be for multitudes; it may be for the holiest, or it may be for the vilest. It is just the same to him. It cannot be too menial or too lofty; it cannot be too little or too much. It is simple obedience. It is reasonable because it is not reasoning service.

V. An angel's response to an order is always instant, and the course the quickest and the straightest. Witness the visit of the angel Gabriel to Daniel. The obedience to the command is always minute, always accurate, and always entire.

VI. If your obedience would be like the obedience of angels, it must always be primarily to Christ. It must touch Him. It must have a savour of Him. There, in that beautiful world where the angels live, Christ is the centre of everything. There is not an eye there that is not fastened on that Master. It would be no obedience at all which did not go up and down upon that altar.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 246.

I. WE begin by inquiring into the meaning of the words. They are often uttered and not felt. They are sometimes spoken in a sense which is very different from, nay opposed to, the whole teaching of Christ. We shall gain a truer idea of the prayer if we begin by clearing away the thoughts respecting God's will which are opposed to the idea of a Father. (1) There is a tendency in man to confuse God's will with the thought of an irresistible force. This confusion may rise very naturally from the consciousness of human insignificance. Contemplating the grandeur of God, and overwhelmed before the majesty that rules the universe at His pleasure, man may submit to God's will because it seems to be an awful power which cannot be resisted. This conception of God's will as an irresistible force springs from forgetfulness of the great difference between God's rule in the kingdom of matter and His will in the kingdom of souls. The essential feature of spirit is its capacity for resisting God. (2) Again, there is a tendency in man to confound the will of God with the thought of an unsearchable self-will. This thought may spring from a sense of ignorance. Enfeebled by conflict, a man's own will may be calm, and yet not surrendered to God in the faith that He does all things well. In that spirit he may say in all quietness, "Thy will be done," but because he has submitted to a mere will, not to a righteous will. (3) It is Christ who teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done." And we may therefore feel that that will, though sovereign, is for our highest good, though working darkly, for our greatest blessedness. We may look out from our poor finite thought on life and the universe to the everlasting will of a gracious and loving Father.

II. There is no other rational law of life than this. In a life of obedience, every struggle, every sorrow, every tear, has a bearing on the future. They chasten the spirit, and help to purify it from its earthliness. Every victory over self-will strengthens the soul and makes it "more than conqueror."

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 191.

How is God's will done in heaven?

I. It is certainly done zealously.

II. The angels in heaven do God's will reverently.

III. God's will is also done in heaven with cheerful alacrity.

IV. God's will is done in heaven perseveringly.

V. Angels do God's will in heaven harmoniously.

VI. God's will is done in heaven perfectly.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 74.

I. HUMAN life is one great want.

II. This want should turn human life into one noble aspiration.

III. This aspiration can only be noble as it is lifted up towards a Father.

IV. This Father must be asked to come in all the power and splendour of a kingdom.

PARKER, *Hidden Springs*, p 271.

REFERENCES: vi. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,778; T. Lessey, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 234; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 316; vol. xi., p. 164; W. Hubbard, *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 193; R. A. Armstrong, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 314; H. Price Hughes, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 261; E. B. Pusey, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 319; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 117; M. Dods, *The Prayer that Teaches to Pray*, pp. 50, 76; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 152; F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 25; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, pp. 415, 421; Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 211; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, pp. 418, 431; R. Heber, *Sermons Preached in England*, p. 193.

Chap. vi., ver. 11.—"Give us this day our daily bread."

I. THE Giver of bread is our Father in heaven. God is the only giver, and yet least recognized. Because He gives so constantly, so quietly, we forget to notice and to thank Him. (1) God gives, for there is none beside Him. (2) God gives good gifts, for He is God and He is our Father. (3) God delights in giving. (4) God gives simply. (5) God never takes back His gifts.

II. The gift—bread. (1) The daily necessity for food may well teach us humility. We have no life in ourselves. (2) Bread is the gift of the Creator through Christ. The earth would be a wilderness were it not for that tree on which Christ was made a curse for us. (3) Bread is the gift of God, and, as all God's gifts, it has a deep and eternal meaning. The Saviour called Himself the Bread of life. Only God in Christ is life-sustaining food; all else, being dead in itself, can neither give nor sustain life.

III. The expansion of the gift—*our* bread. The spirit of the Lord's prayer is filial towards God, brotherly towards man. The little word "our" excludes evidently every calling which is injurious to the interests of our fellow-men. None can offer this petition who are enriched by that which brings misery to others. The word "our" implies also labour. If we eat the bread of idleness and sloth, we enjoy what is not rightfully ours. Toil is the consequence of sin, but labour belonged to Paradise.

IV. The limitation of the gift. "Give us *to-day* our daily bread." Christ would have us free from anxious care. The spirit of the world is feverish and restless; men think of the future and of its possible wants and evils, and are burdened with its weight. We cannot be delivered from such anxiety until we understand that it is not merely foolish but sinful, that it is incompatible with the spirit of adoption, with the attitude of faith.

God wants us to be rich; nay, He wants us to possess all things. But the way to riches is, Give up all, even ourselves.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 250.

I. NOTICE how this prayer is placed. "Thy will be done." That takes the soul right away up into the very highest glory and perfection of heaven. "Forgive us our sins." That reaches right down into the dark deeps into which our trespasses have plunged us. From those great deeps, "our debts," to those heights, "as it is in heaven," we are to rise. Yet between these two comes my text, "Give us this day our daily bread;" a prayer for our business and our basket, lying kindly, tenderly between the depth of our fall and the height of our call. It is as much as to say, that our God can make our bread-winning to help our heaven-winning.

II. The prayer takes it for granted that we are always under the watchful care of our heavenly Father, and yet how much we give way to fretful doubts and anxious cares. The prayer points steadily and surely to the wisdom of being contented with little, and of avoiding all anxious concern about to-morrow.

III. The model prayer has no exclusiveness. It is a stranger to selfishness. It is not, Give me my daily bread. "Our Father" owns our brotherhood, and our brotherhood cares for the wants of others as well as our own; and we cannot use this prayer aright unless we are open-hearted and open-handed to our brother's honest need.

IV. The prayer breathes absolute dependence. You and I are pensioners, and God must give strength to gain it, skill to earn it, power to eat it: all are from Him. What have we that we have not received?

J. Jackson Wray, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 62.

Consider this petition as carrying the wants of the day to God's throne of grace, and pleading for their supply. And in thus considering it, it will be plain that two senses of the words are admissible, and indeed necessary; a temporal and a spiritual sense, according as the daily bread is the sustenance of the body, or that of the immortal spirit.

I. And first for the lower and more obvious of these. "Give us to-day the daily bread of the body." Let us see what is here implied. The petition is one for our physical well-being in general; for food and raiment and shelter, and all that climate and circumstances render necessary to us; and it is admirably expounded in our Church Catechism: "I pray unto God that He will give us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies." Thus simply, thus entirely, do we commend day by day our physical frames unto our Father's hand. It was He who at first fearfully and wonderfully made them; it is He who every moment holds the balance on the nice adjustment of which depends the continuance of their animal vitality. All this goes on without our care. Can He not and will He not also keep them in His charge, in those further provisions from without for which our labour is by His appointment necessary?

II. Let us pass now to the second and higher import of the words of the text. Like the natural life, the spiritual life has its infancy, its youth, its maturity; but unlike natural life, it is not subject, unless violently extinguished by declension into ungodliness, to decay or death. And as it grows upwards its daily bread is necessary for its maintenance, its desires are boundless. Not faith nor love nor holiness, nor anything short of Christ Himself, can feed the spiritual being of man. It is He who must be taken into the soul; and all things that stop short of Him are not nourishment—are but the meat that perisheth, not that which endures unto everlasting life. To apprehend Christ as mine, to lay hold on Him by the hand of faith, and feed on Him by spiritual participation in Him, this is the nourishment of the life of the soul.

H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 163.

ROUTINE Observance Indispensable.

We need to keep fixed times, or appointed rounds of observance, as truly as to be in holy impulse; to have prescribed periods in duty as truly as to have a spirit of duty; to be in the drill of observance, as well as in the liberty of faith.

I. Notice first the very obvious fact that the argument commonly stated, as against the obligation of fixed times and ways of observance in religion, contains a fatal oversight. It is very true that mere rounds of observance, however faithfully kept, have in themselves no value, nothing of the substance of piety; but they have an immense value, when kept and meant to be, as the means of piety. It is equally true that nothing is acceptable to God which is not an offering of the heart. But it does not follow, by any means, that we are therefore to wait doing nothing till the inclinations or impulses of the heart are ready.

II. Look next at the grand analogies of time and routine movement in the world we live in. Without routine it would be only a medley of confusion, a chaos of interminable disorder.

III. I refer you again to the analogy of your own courses in other things, and also to the general analogies of business. As we are by nature diurnal creatures in the matter of waking and sleep, so we are voluntarily creatures of routine and of fixed hours in the matter of food. How is it also in the matter of business, or the transactions of trade and industry? If there is nothing men do with effect in the world of business despising the law of times, how does it happen that they can expect, with any better reason, to succeed in the matter of their religion, their graces, charities, and prayers?

IV. Consider the reason of the Sabbath, where it is assumed that men are creatures, religiously speaking, of routine, wanting it as much as they do principles, fixed times as much as liberty. The design of the fourth commandment is to place order in the same rank with principle, and give it honour in all ages as a necessary element of religion, of the religious life and character.

V. The Scriptures recognize the value of prescribed times and a fixed routine of duty in other ways. The true way to come into liberty and keep ourselves in it is to have our prescribed rules, and in some respects, at least, a fixed routine of duties.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 308.

THE petition for daily bread seems small, because (1) we ask for what so many already possess; (2) we ask it only for the small circle around our table; (3) we ask it only for to-day. It is, nevertheless, a great petition, because (1) we ask that earthly bread may be changed into heavenly; (2) we ask God to feed all those who are in want; (3) we ask Him to supply the daily necessities of a waiting world; (4) we ask it to-day, and ever again to-day. The fact that we thus apply to our heavenly Father teaches us—

I. Our dependence upon Him.
II. A wholesome lesson of contentment.
III. A lesson of frugality and patient labour.
IV. A lesson of moderation.
V. A lesson of benevolence.
IV. A lesson of faith.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 82.

REFERENCES: vi. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 257; M. Dods, *The Prayer that Teaches to Pray*, p. 99; F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 55; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 427; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 422; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 50.

### Chap. vi., ver. 12.—"Forgive us our debts."

KNOWLEDGE and Confession of Sin.

I. Self-examination may become morbid, and produce nothing but torture and despondency. Let us not, however, overlook the necessity of systematic, or rather active self-examination, as the condition of thoughtful confession. It is evident that the commencement of Christian life is absolutely impossible without some knowledge of self. To seek pardon, we must know our sin; to pray for renewal, we must know the evil of our heart. Why is self-knowledge so difficult? The great difficulty in the work is, that we do not like our vanity to be wounded, our pride to be brought low; the more skill we obtain in examining our heart and life, the deeper will our humiliation be. Self-love blinds us, and sin brings with it the darkening atmosphere to hide it from our eyes.

II. True, candid, and full confession depends chiefly on our realizing the Divine presence—the presence of a forgiving and loving God. The very petition which we are now considering is the greatest help to self-examination. Our relation to our fellow-men and to those that trespass against us is the chief test of our actual condition before God. If our hearts are humble and loving towards God, our attitude to our neighbour will be

kind and forgiving. He who feels his sin and unworthiness is able to bear the unjust opinion and the severe criticism of men; without bitterness he will endeavour to profit by every humiliating experience. He who rejoices in God and praises Him for His goodness and patience will be cheerful, long-suffering, and hopeful in his dealings with others. If we know God, and if the countenance of Christ is our study, we shall be able not merely to praise the dead and to build the graves of the prophets, as the Pharisees were wont to do, but to help and comfort the disciples as we have opportunity.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 314.

SIN and Salvation.

I. Even without the announcements of Scripture we notice the existence and we feel to some extent the evil of sin. (1) Sin is a great mystery. The origin and future of sin are alike hid in darkness impenetrable. It is a great enigma, it is irrational, and defies explanation; and yet most problems of human character and conduct are solved by it. (2) Sin prevails everywhere, yet few know it. They who are most familiar with it and most obedient to its sway are least acquainted with its true character and feel least its tyranny. (3) Sin has a wide dominion and many servants. (4) Sin is courageous and defies Heaven; it rebels against the will of Omnipotence; it attacks the immovable pillars of God's throne: yet sin is a coward; when the voice of the Lord is heard at even-time it flees in horror. (5) Sin obscures God, hides Him from our view, like a dark cloud intercepting the light, like a huge mountain separating us from God.

II. How precious is now the Gospel. Forgiveness of sin is connected with the deepest sorrow and the greatest joy. Here are both Mara and Elim. Consider the joy which arises out of the forgiveness of sin. (1) The Triune God rejoices over the sinner saved. And with God all angels rejoice, while they behold the mystery of godliness and adore the Lamb that was slain. (2) The incarnation of the Son of God, His life on earth, His spotless and perfect obedience, filled the Father with joy. Christ fulfilled the commandment which He received of the Father. This obedience is our salvation; it was and ever is a source of joy unto God. (3) The expiation of the cross by His blood is a source of joy. He is the Mediator of the better covenant, and His death is ever precious in the sight of God. It has gained not merely the acquittal of the Judge,

but the unspeakable favour and abundant love of the Father. (4) For God, by redeeming us, has betrothed Himself to us. Christ is our Saviour, but by His death on the cross He has also become our Bridegroom. He gave Himself for us, that He might sanctify and cleanse us to be His bride, beloved and glorified throughout eternity.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 295.

**Chap. vi., ver. 12.—"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."**

Is there not a depth of sadness in that little word "and" which connects the prayer for pardon with the preceding petition for daily bread? It reminds us that as our daily wants return, so do likewise our sins; that we need daily forgiveness as much as the daily supply of our earthly wants. The fourth petition is one of humility and dependence, the fifth one of repentance and contrition. The one reminds us that we are creatures, the other that we are sinners.

I. The daily bread of our souls is daily forgiveness. This is our daily bread—that we see Jesus, our crucified Redeemer, our Righteousness in heaven; that we behold the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. Love cannot be silent. Love must acknowledge sin—not to itself merely, but to the loved one against whom sin is committed. Not in doubt, in the spirit of bondage, but in the trustful and loving spirit of adoption, we ask our heavenly Father to forgive us our debts.

II. Sin is debt. What do we owe God? We owe ourselves to Him; all that we are, body, soul, and spirit, is His, and we ought to be His and to give all to Him, and that always. And this debt is daily growing; for God is always giving, and we are always misappropriating His gifts. We cannot get rid of our debt except by becoming still more His debtors. He forgives us; and now we owe Him more than ever; for as the Apostle says, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." So Christ expects from the sinner to whom much is forgiven that he will love much.

III. God forgives in heaven; we forgive on earth. God forgives to manifest His glory in the salvation of sinners, thus establishing His kingdom in the renewed hearts of believers, who are conformed to the image of Christ. The object of God's showing mercy to us is that we may be not merely forgiven, but that the mind of Christ may be in us; we obtain mercy in order that we may be merciful. The Saviour Himself has

clearly explained that he who has not received the spirit of forgiveness has not truly received the gift of pardon. He enforces this in the most impressive and solemn manner in the parable of the unmerciful servant. He shows us that the love of God cannot truly rest on us if it does not also dwell in us.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 276.

CHRIST teaches distinctly (1) that sin needs forgiveness; that is to say, that it is not merely a disease that needs a remedy, or an imperfection that is to be gradually got rid of, but that it is a guilt, an offence, or transgression that needs forgiveness. He teaches (2) that this sin may be forgiven, that the penalty attaching to it may be remitted. He teaches (3) that what He does for us—His life and death—in some way or other is necessary to this forgiveness. Now it is this part of His teaching that is excepted against. We are asked, Why should this be necessary? And why should it be necessary to add to the words, "Our Father, forgive us," for Jesus Christ's sake? Is not this making God less merciful than a good man?

I. The only one case in which we can imagine complete forgiveness as possible is a case as between two equal individuals, one of whom has wronged the other. Has it ever occurred to you to think that that is just the one position in which no man can stand respecting God? We cannot injure God; our goodness does not extend to Him, neither does our evil. Therefore the answer of the understanding, of the merely sceptical mind, of man to this question, "Can God, the Supreme, forgive?"—the only answer it can make is, "God is the only one Being who cannot possibly forgive." If you think of God as the Author of the inexorable system of law, as the Creator of the whole system of necessary penalty and suffering, I ask again, Where is the hope of the easy forgiveness of which men speak? Is it such a very easy thing to imagine that God can forgive?

II. Let us picture to ourselves some worshipper under the old Jewish polity. David is standing beside the altar and offering up his sacrifice to God. Imagine revealed to that man for a moment all these intellectual difficulties about forgiveness—imagine the glowing fire of love and hope in such a heart chilled as by a cataract with all these chilling thoughts on the impossibility of forgiveness. And then, when his heart was beaten down to the very earth, and in despair he was giving up the very thought of forgiveness, would it seem to him so very

terrible a revelation to be told this?—"It is indeed impossible for you to be forgiven under any law, under any condition of things that you can imagine, but there is for you a revelation of a time that is to come when a miracle shall be wrought upon earth. You whose heart yearns for the blessing of human forgiveness, know you this, that one day shall walk upon earth a Son of man, whose heart shall quiver and throb at the suffering of the very least of His creatures. Understand you this, that God and man shall become one for your deliverance. Learn, then, of a life given for a life, and yet becoming the life of all other lives."

III. Forgiveness is in very deed a mystery of mysteries. It is a mystery as between man and man; it is a mystery as between man and God. The mysteries of the faith are to us just what the shadow on the face of the sun is in the hour of eclipse to the astronomer—a dark shadow, and yet a shadow round the margin of which science is ever making discoveries that teach us the immensity of the system in which we live, and tell us that the life that is here and the life that is there are the same.

BISHOP MAGEE, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 503.

THERE are two things which this text cannot mean. (1) It cannot mean that sinful man is to set an example by which the Divine administration is to be conducted. (2) It cannot mean that God's forgiveness of man is a mere equivalent for something that man himself has done.

I. In suggesting an interpretation of this prayer, let it be observed that this is not the first petition in the prayer. This fact sheds a morning glory around this mystery of the night. *Who* are the men who say, "Forgive as we forgive"? They are men who have said (1) Our Father; (2) Thy kingdom come; (3) Thy will be done on earth. God takes our prayers at the very highest point of their inspiration, and enlarges them into the fullest meaning they can bear, and He will answer the highest, and not merely the lowest of our aspirations.

II. Superficial men who listen to our prayers hesitate not to say that we are inconsistent, because we do not act up to the high level of our petitions. It is forgotten that we express in prayer, not what we *are*, but what we *would be;* prayer is not an attainment, but an aspiration; prayer is not *history*, but *hope;* prayer is not victory, it is fighting.

III. Confession and contrition are the necessary conditions of

forgiveness. It is impossible to forgive a man in the full sense in which we wish God to forgive us apart from these conditions.

PARKER, *Hidden Springs*, p. 266.

**Chap. vi., ver. 12.—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."**

THIS petition presents our heavenly Father in the character of a great creditor, to whom we are deeply in debt, and at whose hands we humbly seek for release.

I. Do you ask, How are we indebted to God? (1) We owe Him a debt of obedience. (2) We owe Him a debt of gratitude.

II. The forgiveness of God, when granted to the returning penitent, is universal and complete. There is, however, a condition attached to this petition for pardon, in the text, which is the turning-point of the whole matter: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 90.

REFERENCES: vi. 12.—S. Coley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 1; F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 73; M. Dods, *The Prayer that Teaches to Pray*, p. 122; W. Milligan, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 130; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 433; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 456. vi. 12-15.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 325.

**Chap. vi., ver. 13.—"And lead us not into temptation."**

TEMPTATION—from God and from Satan.

I. Speaking of Satan's temptation is in itself a temptation, unless in humble dependence upon God our object is practical, to guard against the enemy, and to be prepared and strengthened for the conflict. The world does not know or remember Satan's existence and his aims. This is one of his stratagems. The young Christian does not sufficiently think of his strength and subtlety. How ample is Scripture's teaching on Satan—ample for guidance and instruction, though not to satisfy curiosity. The origin of evil we may not know, but our chief anxiety ought to be to know its *destruction*—the victory over evil—as far as we are concerned. (1) It is of the utmost importance in our conflict with Satan to know what is his real and ultimate aim. His object is to diminish, to obscure, if possible to take away, God's glory, and this object he wishes to effect through the fall and ruin of man. (2) Satan's method is to alter your attitude towards God. He suggests to Eve to examine God's word as standing on a level with God, or

rather for the time being surveying and criticizing God's command. (3) Satan suggests that God's threatenings will not come true, and that His love is not great. (4) Satan promises glory apart from God and in rebellion against God.

II. God tempts. His motive is love; His object is our good. Even during the temptation He weighs with fatherly pity the burden and our strength, and with the temptation He makes a way to escape. The trial of our faith will be formed unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Temptations sent by God bring to light hidden sins and infirmities; they are meant to deepen our humility, that, sinking deep in self-abasement, we may rise higher in simplicity and strength of faith. Such temptations prepare us for closer fellowship with God, they prepare us for greater usefulness in the world, and they manifest unto angels and devils the power of Divine grace in human hearts.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 327.

I. THERE is one little word in this petition which we have not yet noticed. It is the word "us." It seems to suggest three important thoughts. (1) It reminds us of the universality of temptation. All children of God are taught to offer this petition, because they are all in danger of temptation. (2) Whenever you notice the sins and failings of your fellow-Christians and of others, remember they were tempted. Think not so much of their guilt as of their actual condition, and come to their rescue. (3) If we say, "Lead us not into temptation," we profess to be concerned about the safety of others as well as our own.

II. Consider the special temptations of the believer. It is in the nature of things that the presence of God should rouse the opposition of evil. When Jesus draws near the soul temptation immediately arises, and we are kept from the Saviour either through the love of our sin or through the love of our righteousness. When Jesus enters the heart the conflict is decided, but only to begin in a new form.

III. Consider the safety of the believer. The believer may fall, but he cannot fall away. This doctrine, like all Scripture truths, is salutary and comforting to earnest, prayerful, God-loving souls; misleading and dangerous to the formalist and prayerless. Christians cannot fall away, but they may fall. And is this not a great evil? Our life may be embittered and our usefulness impaired. Let none of us, therefore, think of the

safety of the believer in a manner which would be at once foolish and ungenerous, without true love to ourselves and to our most merciful God. We are safe in Him if "near the Cross abiding." Christ is our High Priest, and we are safe. As the names of the children of Israel were engraven on the shoulders and breastplates of Aaron, even thus are we represented in heaven by the Lord who died for us. We are protected by His power and blessed in His love. Golden chains secure the precious stones, so that none can ever be lost. Christ will present us unblamable unto the Father, and the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us, for we are the work of His hands.

**A. SAPHIR**, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 348.

**Chap. vi., ver. 13.—"But deliver us from evil."**

I. EVIL is around us and within us. (1) The evil that is around us may by God's grace be converted into a channel of blessing, and thus belong to the all things which work in harmony for good; and yet let us not forget that from this external evil, also, we ask to be delivered. Let us not forget that all misery is the consequence of sin, and as such evil, which God regards with displeasure, and from which it is His purpose ultimately to deliver. (2) Sin dwells in us; it is not a visitor, but an inmate. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." It is not merely an inmate, but a bold, ever-watchful, persistently interfering *enemy*. "I see another law striving in my members." It is not merely an enemy, but it has established itself in adaptation to my organization, mental and physical, and through long habit become a law, working almost unconsciously, and with a regularity and force which are appalling. No wonder the believer exclaims, "Deliver us from evil."

II. But who delivers? The evil is so great, so deep, so widespread, that none can deliver but God. Our Father who loves us—our Father who is in heaven, whose power is infinite, whose glory is above all—He is willing, He is able. Here are the hills to which we lift up our eyes, imploring help. But how does God deliver us? He delivers us by Christ. "Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." Who delivers the true Israel from all evil? Who else but the Angel, the Messenger of the Covenant.

III. Look, in conclusion, at the promise involved in the petition. At the appearing of Christ our life shall be made

manifest, our salvation shall be revealed, our adoption, even the redemption of the body, shall be complete. Blessed and peaceful as is our condition immediately after death, only when Jesus comes again shall we receive the crown of righteousness and the perfect glory.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 362.

**Chap. vi., ver. 13.—"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."**

I. WE take a sevenfold view of praise. (1) Prayer ends in praise; but God, who sees the end from the beginning, sees praise in every petition. (2) Praise is the language of the soul in communion with God. (3) Though praise is essentially contained in every supplication, and all meditation and the whole inner life of the Christian is in constant adoration, yet we may regard praise as the *culminating point of prayer*. (4) Let us learn, too, that the doxology is an argument. We say, "*For* thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." We expect to be heard, not on account of anything in ourselves, not because of what we are or promise to be; but our sure and only hope is in God, His character, His name, His promise. (5) Praise is faith, and it is more than faith. It stands on the borderland—very bright indeed; for faith itself is in light—between faith and vision, between earth and heaven. (6) The great bond of union is praise. (7) Praise is God's gift, the flower of redemption, the breath of the Spirit, the voice of Jesus in the Church.

II. Consider the threefold ascription of praise. (1) "Thine is the kingdom." It is not ours; it is altogether His. He prepared it from all eternity. He founded it on a sure foundation. In nature, in providence, in grace, He is sovereign; and there is a kingdom of glory which He is preparing through these subordinate kingdoms. (2) As the kingdom is His, so power belongeth unto the Lord. He is able to do all things which please Him. Christ is the Word of His power. By Him all things were created, and by Him they are upheld. The power of God is manifested through His Son. (3) His is the kingdom, and by His power will it be established, for the end of all Divine works and ways is His glory.

III. The kingdom, power, and glory belong to the *Triune God*, and *for ever*.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 379.

I. The Church may reckon the doxology amongst the treasures which it inherited from the synagogue and the Temple. The Greeks did not invent it; they adopted it. In fact, we may find the doxology ready made, so to speak, in the Old Testament itself (1 Chron. xxix.). David was not peculiar in his utterance; his mode of speech became a common mode in the Jewish Church; the ascription of glory became an almost necessary adjunct of Jewish prayer. The addition of these words as a crowning sentence to the Lord's prayer in the Liturgy of the Primitive Church may be regarded as an unconscious prophecy of the eventual triumph of the Cross.

II. The doxology, which the piety of early times or the inspiration of the Holy Ghost added to the original words of the Lord's prayer, and which the instinct and conscience of Christendom have ever recognized as a worthy addition, has an interesting and valuable bearing upon primitive Church history and primitive Church feeling. But it is for ourselves still more interesting and still more valuable, as suggesting thoughts concerning the nature of prayer in general, and the manner and temper in which men ought to pray. Petition melts into praise; asking has its climax in ascription; thanksgiving from man to God is as essential an element of prayer as any giving of good things from God to man. It is when petitions turn into doxologies, and doxologies accompany and qualify petitions, transforming the mere demand of a beggar into the ethereal essence of communion with God, that prayer is most truly offered on earth and most acceptable in heaven.

Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *The Oxford Review*, Feb. 4th, 1885.

I. If we ask in what way "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory" belong unto God, it is obvious to answer that they are His because He is the one self-existent supreme God, the *I am that I am*, He who owns no origin, who has no cause of being besides Himself. But there is another way in which we may think of a kingdom and power and glory belonging to God, and which other way has a nearer connection with us as Christians than that general way of looking upon such things as belonging to God in right of His being the supreme God and Creator of all things; I mean that our Father who is in heaven has established a right to the title of King of men, and has given men better cause to give in ascribing power and glory to Him, by what He has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord.

II. If the kingdom, and the power, and the glory do indeed belong to God, then doubtless it is our duty, yea our very highest duty, to recognize in our lives and practice that such is the case. (1) If God be really your King, take care that you really fear and obey Him; if in your prayers you ascribe the kingdom to God, then do not in your lives ascribe the kingdom to any person or anything else. There are many competitors for the crown: there is Satan in all his manifold forms; there is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; there is that usurping king which governs so large a part of the world, that tyrant *self;* take care that none of these become your masters, and usurp that throne which belongs to God, which belongs to Him by every right which can give Him a title to you. (2) Let us further illustrate by our lives these other words, "Thine is the *power;*" let us endeavour to live practically in the faith that all power belongs to God. We are in a world of much confusion and difficulty, and we feel that we ourselves are weak and feeble; but surely our God is a God of power, powerful to preserve from evil, powerful to keep us from sin, powerful enough to give us peace in our death and a happy resurrection after it. (3) If you ascribe in your prayers glory to God, then see to it well that you do ascribe glory to God in your lives, glorifying God with your bodies and your spirits, which are His.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 143

Chap. vi., ver 13.—"Amen."

I. THE word "Amen" is a word of venerable history in Israe and in the Church.

II. The word Amen announces God's truth and faithfulness. Prayer is a great reality. It is speaking to the living God. The object of prayer is not that we may speak, but that God may hear. Amen assures us we have spoken to Him who is, and who is truth. God lives; "faithful is He tha calleth you."

III. Amen is the name of Christ. "All the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus."

IV. We view Amen as the seal of prayer.

V. Amen is the voice of faith.

VI. Amen is the answer of a good conscience.

VII. It is a renewal of our dedication to God.

A. SAPHIR, *Lectures on the Lord's Prayer*, p. 404.

REFERENCES: vi. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,402; vol. ix., No. 509; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 98; M. Dods,

*The Prayer that Teaches to Pray*, p. 151; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 339; W. Hubbard, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 155; R. Payne-Smith, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 9; F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 89, 117; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 440; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 471.

Chap. vi., vers. 16-18.—"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; . . . that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret."

Let us ask what is the use of fasting, for so we shall best come to understand the true methods and degrees of fasting. All bodily discipline, all voluntary abstinence from pleasure of whatever sort, must be of value either as a symbol of something or a means of something. These two functions belong to it as being connected with the body, which is at once the utterer and the educator of the soul within. No man can be a better man save as his pride is crushed into repentance, and as the sweltering, enwrapping mass of passions and indulgences that is around him is broken through, so that God can find his soul and pour Himself into it. This, then, is the philosophy of fasting. It expresses repentance, and it uncovers the life to God. It is the voluntary disuse of anything innocent in itself, with a view to spiritual culture.

I. Consider first the value of fasting as a symbol. It expresses the abandonment of pride. But it is the characteristic of a symbolic action that it not merely expresses but increases and nourishes the feeling to which it corresponds. And if abstinence is the sign of humility, it is natural enough that as the life abstains from its ordinary indulgences the humiliation which is so expressed should be deepened by the expression. Thus the symbol becomes also a means.

II. Note the second value of fasting—its value directly as a means. The more we watch the lives of men, the more we see that one of the reasons why men are not occupied with great thoughts and interests is the way in which their lives are overfilled with little things. The real Lent is the putting forth of a man's hand to quiet his own passions and to push them aside, that the higher voices may speak to him and the higher touches fall upon him. It is the making of an emptiness about the soul, that the higher fulness may fill it. Perhaps some day the lower needs may themselves become, and dignify themselves by becoming, the meek interpreters and ministers of those very

powers which they once shut out from the soul. There will be no fasting days, no Lent, in heaven. Not because we shall have no bodies there, but because our bodies there will be open to God, the helps and not the hindrances of spiritual communication to our souls.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 200.

PROPERLY speaking, fasting is not so much a duty enjoined by revelation as it is the natural expression of certain religious feelings and desires. There is but one special fast ordained in the Old Testament, and there is none at all ordained in the New. Yet one cannot fail to see that the exercise is nevertheless quite in accordance with the whole tenour of a true religious life of all ages; and that, if it is not expressly commanded, it is only because nature itself teaches us in certain circumstances thus to afflict the soul. These circumstances which would obviously suggest this exercise are twofold.

I. Fasting is the natural expression of grief, and therefore the natural accompaniment of godly sorrow. It is a mistaken kindness to press dainties on the heart when it has no appetite for aught but its sorrow. Better let it have its fill of grief—better every way for body and mind. Spiritual sorrow in the same way suggests, and is the better for, this exercise of fasting.

II. Fasting is also a wise method of keeping down the law of the flesh which is in our members. Rich and poor will be the better for a fast now and then, to mortify the flesh, to weaken the incentives to evil, to subdue in some measure the carnal nature, and give freer play and power to the spiritual man within.

III. Our Lord counsels His people, (1) that their fasting must be real, sincere, genuine—a thing to be seen, not of men, but of God; (2) that fasting in the Christian Church should be altogether private, and even secret, not only not in order to be seen of men, but absolutely hidden from them. Religion does not consist in a sour visage or morose habit—nay, more, religion is not properly a sorrowful thing. The Gospel was not sad tidings, but glad tidings for all mankind, and we are not acting fairly by it unless we strive so to present it, in all its winning and attractive beauty, that men shall be led to seek after Jesus. Christianity has its godly sorrow, has its heart-grief for sin, has its fasting and mortifying of the flesh; yet we do it utter injustice unless we also make it appear that it is,

taken as a whole, the only true blessedness and peace and joy, the only walk with God which is gladness everlasting.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 193.

REFERENCE: vi. 16.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 133. vi. 16-18.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Laws of the Kingdom*, p. 219; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 263. vi. 16-21.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 57; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 94. vi. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 141. vi. 17, 18.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 131.

Chap. vi., vers. 19-21.

WHEN Christ said these words, were there young people standing by? If so, they must have sounded very strangely in their ears. For youth does not realize that life on earth grows pale, nor in the midst of its treasures dreams that the day will come when they shall fail. But on the ears of older men and women His words fell with a profound meaning. They struck home to that which is bitterest in human life; more sharply felt, because more constant, than even the special sorrows which, breaking in from time to time on life, still leave us intervals of peace. It is the sense of the passing away of all things, the knowledge that day by day and hour by hour the moth and rust are at work; that time, as it slips by, steals with it our treasures, and with them our heart out of our bosom.

I. What are those true treasures which can never be exhausted? It is time we should seek and find these things, if they may be found. Do they exist? Oh, yes! There are things immortal, ever young. No moth corrupts the garment of a pure spirit; no rust consumes the armour of God—the shield of faith, the sandals of the Gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, the breastplate of truth. No thief can rob us of the love of God, the knowledge of His will the peace of Christ and His joy, which the world cannot give or take.

II. The first of these treasures is Truth, and its correlative Constancy; for that which is true endures all shocks. Give half the intensity to it you give to money or fame or human love, and it is yours—nay, give to its pursuit one week of the same consuming thought you give to anything you set your heart on, and it is yours for ever.

III. And righteousness, treasure of treasures, lord of all other treasures, protector and securer of all we care for upon earth, win it at all costs. For it is sin that is the rust and the moth that devour the joys and welfare of our lives.

IV. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The desire of earth will be towards heaven, because there will be full enjoyment there of these perfect things. We want fulfilment; we must have perfection, fulness of love and truth and purity, to be filled with all the fulness of God. Nothing less than that will satisfy the boundless thirst of the human soul. It is like the gulf in the Forum—till the most precious treasure is cast into it, it will not close. Therefore we cannot rest; therefore all the whole earth cannot give peace to one of us. Where our treasure is, not only our heart's desire, but our very selves shall be at last.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 307.

THE Law kept by Faith.

I. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." This word of Christ's, and others of a similar character, which He spoke on other occasions, did not mean literally to forbid the natural accumulation of capital and property, which certainly would have placed the Gospel in opposition to some of the laws of social progress. And that it did not so mean is further proved by the fact that, in reality, the civilization of the modern world keeps pace with the advance of Christian faith; and those countries in which the Gospel is upheld in greatest purity, and manifests its greatest living power, are precisely those which are most signally known for their successful prosecution of all honest industry.

II. The special reason given here for inculcating this lesson is, that "moth and rust corrupt them, and thieves break through and steal." These treasures are precarious at the best, and perishable certainly in the long run. And it is altogether unworthy of a creature fitted to hold converse with God and truth and all that is most elevating and Divine, to degrade himself to mean pursuits whose highest fruits are a little meat and drink, and mouth-honour and vain display.

III. By the laying up of treasures in heaven, I understand the pursuit not of things carnal but spiritual. It is to set our hearts on obtaining the knowledge and wisdom, the virtues and graces, of God's true sons. It is to seek moral worth and truth and love above all possessions and honours of this world. It is to labour to do good, rather than to get profit of any kind; for such good works are kept in God's treasury carefully. Or, to sum up all in one word, it is to win Christ, and be found in Him, and He in us. These are the real treasures, and they are

eternal—treasures of knowledge and wisdom, all hid in Christ; riches of grace and peace, all found in Christ. Understand that these are the true wealth and glory of man; and then "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 208.

REFERENCES: vi. 19.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 188. vi. 19, 20.—J. O. Davies, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 264; C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 49. vi. 19-21.—G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 118. vi. 19-34.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 213.

Chap. vi., ver. 20.—"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

I. THIS is one of those passages in which God takes hold of a strong master-passion of the human mind, and turns it to great spiritual account. The love of accumulation is such a principle in our nature that it will be doubted whether there is any man who is altogether free from the power of its fascination. Whatever it be there is being heaped up, two consequences always follow. (1) One is that, however indifferent the matter was at first, yet the very fact that you have a possession in it, and that that possession is increasing, makes you love it. Your own self becomes associated with the growing store; and, therefore, it becomes dear to you. And this seems to me the exact intention of our Saviour's words, when He says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (2) If we have desired to gather much, we always desire to gather more. The larger the property grows, the faster swells the ambition to augment that heap. And this again lies in our Lord's deep sentence, when He meets this very feeling, and says, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given."

II. Notice the manner in which a Christian may lay up treasure in heaven. (1) Is not each departed companion and friend an actual increase of the deep and holy treasure which is awaiting us in another state? To the man of Christian friendships death only sweeps the field to house the harvest. (2) The joy that surpasses all other joys which we carry with us from this world will be the meeting again with those to whom we have been useful in this life. They are our treasure laid up in heaven. (3) Every man has his time and his talents, and his influence and his money, as working materials. in the use of these he is constantly considering their value for eternity, that man is putting by treasures gradually into God's bank, and he looks, and has a right to look, for favour in eternity. (4) By holy contemplation on the joys and

scenes of heaven, we do actually, through the power of faith, grow into such a holy familiarity with the joys and scenes of heaven, that, in part, they are all ours. Like the breathing substance of some oft-repeated fancy, eternity will be to us the great realization of the laid-up treasures of our heart.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 151.

REFERENCES: vi. 20.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 431. vi. 21.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 211; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 182.

Chap. vi., ver. 22.—"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

THE idea conveyed by a "single eye" appears to be, from its etymology, threefold. First, it means clear, with no film; secondly, it means in opposition to double, seeing one object at a time; and thirdly, it means concentration, centred upon a focus. These three thoughts mainly go to make up the word "single,"—distinctness, oneness, fixedness.

I. Many things may give a dulness to the moral sight. (1) If it be impaired by disuse—if you do not exercise the spiritual perception which God has given you, by meditation, by prayer, and religious thought—then the perception must grow weak. (2) Things coming in between veil and darken that higher vision. A worldly life is sure to do it. Much care will do it. Luxury will do it. But, still more, any wilful unbelief or any strong prejudice.

II. A clear eye must be often cleared. It is the great secret of a happy, holy life—to have made up your mind, once and for all, to live for one thing—to do what is right, and to live to the glory of God. And then upon that one object you must concentrate yourself. Your whole mind, affections, hopes, interests, must meet there. You converge your eternity upon God.

III. There are two worlds around us—a seen world and an unseen world; and we move equally in the midst of both. And the unseen system is far more beautiful, and far grander, and more important than the system that we see. The seen is mainly the type and the shadow of the unseen. It is the unseen which is the real, for that unseen is for ever and ever. But it is not all of us who see the unseen. Few of us are seeing the unseen very distinctly, and none of us are seeing it as we might; and the reason is the state of the eye of the soul, which is as really an eye to see the unseen as that natural eye by which you gaze upon a star or by which you admire a flower.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 197.

Our responsibility for the light given us includes two things, distinct in themselves, though closely connected—viz., our responsibility for living and acting according to that light; and our responsibility for having and seeing the light itself—that is, our responsibility for acting consistently with our belief and opinions, and our responsibility for our belief and opinions, for their formation and hold upon our minds. The two run into each other. But I wish at present to keep in view mainly the latter.

I. On the whole, the government of our minds is in our own hands. That great instrument of reason given to us, we can play on it much as we will, well or ill, wisely or foolishly; and the result is the complex fabric of habitual thought, opinion, conviction, faith, on which we have to live. Who can reasonably say that for this we are not responsible? It is, then, a matter of supreme importance how we hear, how we reach our conclusions and build up our beliefs. We cannot remind ourselves too often or too seriously that the questions which are so freely discussed among us now are questions of life or death to human hope; not in one particular form and under one set of conditions only, but in any form intelligible to our minds. Our time is a time to be watchful over both life and intellect, watchful over the way we handle the grave questions we may be called upon to handle, and over the way in which we prepare ourselves to handle them.

II. A great conflict is going on between Christianity and ideas and beliefs which would destroy or supplant it. We remark on the improved character of the discussion; the times of Voltaire, we observe with satisfaction, are past. But with all the literary power, and all the real and often pathetic earnestness shown in it, there is wanting often an adequate sense of the full issues raised by it, a sense of what in fact depends on it. If we must lose Christianity, let us be alive to what we are doing, and face with open eyes the consequences. Let us have the seriousness which befits the surrender of such a hope, with which a vanquished state surrenders territory or independence to the necessities of defeat, with which, in the old strife of parties, a beaten statesman surrendered his life and fate to the law. Let us recognize the thinker's duties, his temptations, and his safeguards. Remember what an element time is in all growth. By simply waiting our horizon widens—widens almost without our knowing it. Those who undertake to woo truth by their own courage must not stumble at her conditions. They must not think it strange if for that Divine

Bride they have to serve the seven years, and then the seven years again.

DEAN CHURCH, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, Nov. 15th, 1877.

I. CONSCIENCE is the organ that stands between the intelligence of man and the spiritual world, just as the eye stands between the intelligence of man and the world of physical nature, and brings the two together. It is the opened and unopened window through which flows the glorious knowledge of God and heaven; or outside of which that knowledge waits, as the sun with its glory or the flower with its beauty waits outside the closed eye of a blind or sleeping man.

II. When one declares this, that through the conscience man arrives at the knowledge of unseen things, and conceptions of God and spiritual force and immortality reveal themselves to his intelligence, at once the suggestion comes from some one who is listening, Can we be sure of the reality of what thus seems to be made known? How can we be sure that what the conscience sends in to the understanding are not mere creations of its own? These are the same questions which have always haunted man's whole thought about his vision of the world of nature. The questions which haunt the conscience are the same as those which haunt the eye. And as the eye deals with its questions, so will the conscience always deal with its.

III. There is an openness of conscience, a desire and struggle to do right, which is distinctly turned away from God and the world of spiritual things, so that, even if they were there, it would not see them. On the other hand, there is an openness of conscience, a desire and struggle to do right, which is turned towards God and the supernatural, which is expectant of spiritual revelation; and to that conscience the spiritual revelation comes.

IV. We are led thus to that which Jesus teaches in the text—the critical importance of a pure, true conscience, of a steady, self-sacrificing struggle to do right Godward. So only can the channel be kept open through which the knowledge of God, and of the spiritual things which belong to Him, can enter into our souls. As long as man is able to do right Godward, to keep his conscience pure and true and reverent, set upon doing the best things on the highest grounds, he carries with him an eye through which the everlasting light may, and assuredly will, shine into his soul.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 74.

OBSERVE: I. What is here meant by singleness of eye. It is being wholly decided for Christ; that is, having an eye to Christ alone.

II. The consequences of having the eye single: (1) there will be light, first of all, in regard to God and His dealings; (2) there is light in regard to our own position and character; (3) there is light in regard to revelation; (4) there is light in regard to our own experience.

W. PARK, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 596.

REFERENCES: vi. 22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 79. vi. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 335; W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 392; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 186; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons chiefly Practical*, p. 15; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 259; J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 463.

**Chap. vi., vers. 22-24.**

THE illustration of the text has a twofold reference. It bears on what went before, and also on what follows. If we lay up treasures on earth, that will produce an evil eye; if we try to serve God and mammon, that will destroy the single eye. Look at the passage in both these aspects.

I. If the light within you be true, if it be your real heart's desire to see what is right, if your affections are set on those things which are just and pure and lovely, the things heavenly and eternal, then shall your eye be single, and as ye look forth on the world ye shall be able to estimate its treasures at their proper value, for they will have lost to you the glamour and the fascination which they exercise over others. Their inherent emptiness, their essential vanity, their utter precariousness, their certain brevity will be all naked and open to the clear vision of faith, which sees them in their true character and values them at their proper worth.

II. Consider next the evil eye, as it is produced by the effort to serve both God and mammon. The influence of utter and unmitigated worldliness, when a man gives himself to it heartily and without scruple or drawback; that is, as we have seen, to blind his mind altogether to the higher concerns of the spiritual world. Therefore he never troubles himself about them; can see no need of them, and no value in them. That is a sad state of darkness; but it is a sort of honest darkness, and is consistent with a certain genuineness of character. But the effort to serve both God and mammon produces a kind of self-deception, which is to my mind greatly more pernicious and worse to overcome

than the former. The thorough worldling knows himself to be so, and his evil eye sees nothing else worth troubling himself about. The other, however, fondly persuades himself that he is not a worldling, that he is, indeed, far superior to the worldling; his evil eye sees, in a measure, what is right and good, but only regards it so far as may be necessary to keep his mind easy in its worldliness. Thus the light which is in him serves more effectually the purpose of darkness.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 224.

REFERENCE: vi. 22, 23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 378.

Chap. vi., ver. 24.—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

I. IT is very difficult to make men believe these words; so difficult, that our Lord Himself could not make the Jews believe them, especially the rich and comfortable religious people among them. They thought that they could have their treasure on earth and in heaven also; and they went their way, in spite of our Lord's warnings, and made money,—honestly, no doubt, if they could; but if not, why, then dishonestly,—for money must be made at all risks.

II. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God; the government of God; the laws and rules by which Christ, King of kings—and king, too, of every nation and man on earth, whether they know it or not—governs mankind; that is what you have to seek, because it is there already. You are in Christ's kingdom. If you wish to prosper in it, find out what its laws are. That will be true wisdom. For in keeping the commandment of God and obeying His laws, in that alone is life—life for body and soul, life for time and eternity.

III. And the righteousness of God, which is the righteousness of Christ—find out what that is, and pray to Christ to give it to you; for so alone will you be what a man should be—created after God in righteousness and true holiness, and renewed into the being and image of God. The merely assenting, merely respectable, even the so-called religious and orthodox life will not let you into the kingdom of heaven, either in this life or the life to come. No; that requires the noble life, the pure life, the just life, the God-like life, which is perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. But how will this help you to rise in life? Our Lord Himself answers: "All these things shall be added unto you." Honour and power, wealth and prosperity, as much of them as is justly good for you, and as much of them as you deserve—that is, earn and merit by your own ability

and self-control—shall come to you by the very laws of the universe and by the very providence of God. You shall find that godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 290.

REFERENCES: vi. 24.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 30; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 141; W. Stubbs, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 177; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 182; J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. iii., p. 240; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 157.

**Chap. vi., vers. 24, 25.—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life."**

I. ANXIOUS thought is contrary to the teaching of nature. (1) You are obliged to trust God for your body, for its structure, for its form, for its habitudes, and for the length of your being; you are obliged to trust Him for the foundation—trust Him for the superstructure. (2) God gives you the life of the body, and God's greater gifts are always inclusive of God's little gifts. When He bestows the thing, He bestows the consequences of the thing as well. (3) Look at God's way of doing with all His creatures. The flowers of the field are so clothed that we may learn the lesson that it is a fair Spirit and a loving Spirit and a bountiful Spirit, and a royal heart, that presides over the bestowments of creation and allots gifts to men. (4) Much of the force of what Christ says here depends on the consideration of the inferiority of those creatures who are thus blessed. (*a*) These creatures labour not, and yet are they fed. Much more may we, whom God has blessed with the power of work and gifted with force to mould the future, be sure that He will bless the exercise of the prerogative by which He exalts us above inferior creatures and makes us capable of toil. (*b*) These creatures cannot say "Father," and yet they are fed. (*c*) To-day it is, and to-morrow it is cast into the oven. Their little life is thus blessed and brightened. How much greater will be the mercies that belong to them who have a longer life upon earth, and who never die!

II. Anxious care is contrary to all the lessons of religion or revelation, which show it to be heathenism. "After these things do the Gentiles seek."

III. Finally, Christ tells us that thought for the morrow is contrary to all the scheme of Providence, which shows it to be vain. To-morrow has anxieties enough of its own, after and in

spite of all the anxieties about it to-day, by which you try to free it from care when it comes. *Every* day will have its evil, will have it to the end; and every day will have evil enough for all the strength that a man has to cope with it. So that it just comes to this—anxiety. It is all in vain. It does not empty to-morrow of its sorrows, but it empties to-day of its strength. We have always strength to bear the evil when it comes; we have not strength to bear the foreboding of it. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 1st series, p. 243.

REFERENCES: vi. 24-34.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 349; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 91; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 224; A. Whyte, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 224. v. 25.—A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 137; J. W. Haffenden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 109; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,783; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 313.

**Chap. vi., vers. 25-34.**

IN verses 25-6 we have an argument against giving place to the cares of this world, on the ground that they are unworthy of an immortal being like man; and also an illustration pointedly leading to the exercise of faith.

I. The question before the Lord was not whether we should be as idle as the birds, but only whether we should, like them, cast off care and trust our heavenly Father. Toil is man's lot. He must sow and reap. We cannot expect the daily manna unless we go and gather it. The argument is not against labour, but against worldly care; and this is the purport of it: God cares for the little birds; He provides their food in due season; and they, instead of burdensome anxiety, in their unconscious gratitude are ever hymning His praise. Now this God is your Father; ye are the children of the Highest; and if He provides for the very birds, how much more will a Father's love and watchfulness care for each of you. Only trust Him, therefore, and all shall be well.

II. The Lord exhorts us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. This is the pith and kernel of the whole matter. What He means is, that they are not to set their hearts on the kingdom, the possessions, of this world—its riches and honours, and pampering indulgences and vain displays; neither are they to vex their hearts with cares concerning these, as the Gentiles do, sinking thereby into a like degradation with them, but they are to make it their foremost object

to obtain spiritual treasures—meekness, temperance, patience, faith, love, and all things just and true and honest and pure and lovely, which are the true riches and real honours of man, the only dignities acknowledged in the kingdom of God. Now the way to obtain these is through faith in God and His Christ. Their great effort, therefore, should be to believe that God reigns, and to trust Him with a most loyal and unswerving devotion. This is obviously what is here meant by seeking the kingdom of God. The righteousness of God here meant is the righteousness of His government—His all-holy and wise administration, which we are to cherish with a steadfast faith.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 239.

REFERENCES: vi. 25-34.—J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 146. vi. 26.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 26; A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 140; J. M. Neale, *Sermons to Children*, p. 204. vi. 26-28.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, vol. i., No. 16.

**Chap. vi., vers. 26, 28, 29.**

CONSIDER the Lilies of the Field.*

I. What has this text to do with Easter Day? Let us think a while. Life and death; the battle between life and death; life conquered by death; and death conquered again by life. Those were the mysteries over which the men of old time thought, often till their hearts were sad. And because our forefathers were a sad and earnest folk; because they lived in a sad and dreary climate, where winter was far longer and more bitter than it is, thank God, now: therefore all their thoughts about winter and spring were sad; and they grew to despair, at last, of life ever conquering death, or light conquering darkness. All living things would die. The very gods would die, fighting to the last against the powers of evil, till the sun should sink for ever, and the world be a heap of ashes. And then—so strangely does God's gift of hope linger in the hearts of men—they saw, beyond all that, a dim dream of a new heaven and a new earth, in which should dwell righteousness; and of a new sun, more beautiful than ours; of a woman called "Life" hid safe, while all the world around her was destroyed, fed on the morning dew, preserved to be the mother of a new and happier race of men. And so to them, heathens as they were, God whispered that Christ should some day bring life and immortality to light.

* Preached on Easter Day.

II. "So it pleased the Father," says St. Paul, "to gather together in Christ all things, whether in heaven or in earth." In Him were fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, the dim longings, the childlike dreams, of heathen poets and sages, and of our own ancestors from whom we spring. He is the Desire of all nations, for whom all were longing, though they knew it not. And now we may see, it seems to me, what the text has to do with Easter Day. Be not anxious, says our Lord, for your life. Is not the life more than meat? There is an eternal life which depends not on earthly food, but on the will and word of God your Father; and that life in you will conquer death. Consider the lilies of the field. All the winter they are dead, unsightly roots, hidden in the earth. What can come of them? But no sooner does the sun of spring shine on their graves than they rise into sudden life and beauty as it pleases God, and every seed takes its own peculiar body. Even so is the resurrection of the dead.

C. KINGSLEY, *Discipline and Other Sermons*, p. 168.

**Chap. vi., ver. 27.—"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"**

IT is well for men to think that there are some things which, with all their power, they cannot do. The inquiry of the text serves to rebuke our anxiety and humble our impious ambition, by asking us questions which conduct us still farther into the glory and the mystery of God's kingdom.

I. Which of us by taking thought can find out God? "The world by wisdom knew not God." The world dreamed, guessed, groped—and the result was an acknowledgment of the *Unknown*. The world in the fulness of its wisdom found its way to an unexplained shadow, and there it stood, terrified by its own discovery, dumb through fear, skulking from a spectre which it could never brighten into a god.

II. Which of you by taking thought can direct his own life? This we have tried to do many a time, so we can speak with all the distinctness and emphasis of experience. There are some things which your heavenly Father takes into His own hands. There are some keys which He never takes off His own girdle and puts into the possession of cherub, seraph, or man, seeing that you are beaten at every point, and thrown back hopelessly in many of your endeavours. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

III. Which of you by taking thought can discover a plan

for redeeming and saving the soul? This is a subject on which we have expended thought. Still there is unrest in our souls; there is bitterness in our chief joy. If you cannot add one cubit unto your stature, how can you save the world?

IV. This great fact of the Divine limitation of human power is to rule us in the deepest of our studies and in the profoundest of our worship. If we lay hold of this truth, and have a clear, deep, tender conviction of it, three great effects ought to be produced upon our life: (1) it should foster the most loving and confident trust in the goodness of God; (2) it should moderate our tone respecting opinions which are not decisively settled by revelation; (3) this truth should encourage us to cultivate with fuller patience and intenser zeal the powers which we know to be capable of expansion.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 297.

CAREFULNESS of a certain kind is not only allowed; it is required. But anxiety is forbidden. Due care is a moderate amount of thought. Anxiety is that immoderate degree of thought about anything which distracts the mind and disquiets the heart. Due care assists effort, making the eye single, the hand steady, the foot firm. Anxiety embarrasses exertion, making the eye evil, the hand tremulous, the foot feeble.

I. Anxiety is evidently useless about things not under our own control. The duration of life is one of these things. Anxiety may abbreviate, and certainly it does embitter life, but it never can prolong it. Health and disease are other things in connection with which anxiety is useless. Anxiety brings disease and cherishes it, instead of preventing and checking it. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"

II. Anxiety is useless in matters under our own management. Now, it is God's ordinance that we should earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, and the most honourable men are those who have to do it and who do it. Now, anxiety will not furnish opportunity of earning bread or arm us with power. Anxiety never opened a port, or brought a foreign order, or improved the money market, or filled and ripened an ear of corn.

III. The utility of anxiety is nowhere apparent. It does not attract to us the notice of God. It does not induce God to care for us. He cares for us irrespective of our carefulness. Moreover, there is no promise made to anxiety. There are great promises made to diligence, to prudence, to faith, to hope,

to trust—especially to trust; but there is not one to an anxious mind. Anxiety is dealt with as a moral disease.

IV. The strongest possible proof that there is no advantage in anxiety is found in the fact that Jesus bids you get rid of it. He never tells us to part with anything that is worth keeping. Cast it off, then, and get rid of it. "Casting all your care on Him, for He careth for you."

S. MARTIN, *Penny Pulpit*, New Series, No. 318.

REFERENCES: vi. 27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 168; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 164; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 74.

Chap. vi., ver. 28.—"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."

I. CONSIDER the lilies—and identify little things with God's care. Can you make a lily? You cannot make a *sun*; can you make one drop of dew? God writes minutely as well as largely. He writes the great letters of the stars; He writes also the small letters of the violets and daisies.

II. Consider the lilies—and see the superiority of the natural over the artificial. Let the glorious dress of the king represent the artificial. God makes the original; man makes the copy. For all originality—mental and moral, as well as physical—we must go to the Father.

III. Consider the lilies—and look on things beneath, as well as on things above. Look for God when thou lookest at the dust. The dust is alive with the life of God.

IV. Consider the lilies—and have faith in your Father. Think of God clothing the grass and forgetting the child! It is *impossible*. Let a lily detach itself from its root, and it must perish. So with man. Let him cut himself off from God, and he will become as a withered and driven leaf.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 366.

I. THE first thought in the sermon of the lilies is a lesson of trust—confidence in God, repose, rest in Him. "O man!" they seem to say, "think of us; our life is very brief, but what beauty is bestowed upon us, for we are, every one of us, a thought of God! We die so speedily, and yet God cares for us: ye are much better than we. Consider how many things had to meet together to make a lily beautiful, and the thing of joy it is for ever! Consider how we grow: we are not care-worn as you are; wrinkles do not fret our fair leaves; our heavenly Father feeds us with earth from beneath and moisture from above.

II. Consider how they grow. Consider, (1) how miraculously they grow. Surely if anywhere we have the handwriting of God, it is here! This growth is no new life; it is only that daily change which is development. If any one professed himself unable to see a God I would point him to a flower; I would say, Consider the lilies. (2) Consider with what beauty and loveliness they grow. They show the obviousness of inner beauty; it is all very calm and sweet and quiet—all from within; they attract to themselves essences and helps from the whole earth, but they must be in harmony with the proper spirit of the plant. (3) Consider by what improbable auxiliaries they grow; consider by what a hidden life they grow. Is it not strange that such purity should spring from the black earth—strange that such whiteness should shoot up from the soiled ground? It is a mighty miracle, and it is ever going on. (4) Consider how yieldingly and complyingly they grow. (5) Consider to what Divine uses they grow. They have no use to the sense—only to the heart.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 33.

REFERENCES: vi. 28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 278; A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 357; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 137, vol. xx., p. 14; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 149; *New Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 7; Todd, *Lectures to Children*, p. 183; A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 182; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 129; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Hurstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 443; J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 76.

**Chap. vi., vers. 28, 29.**

I. THE lilies of the field, as God's workmanship, reveal the Fountain of life and being. Flowers show nothing of boundless might and of high wisdom, but they do reveal the calm beauteousness of the Source whence all living things flow.

II. The lilies of the field embody and express Divine conceptions—thoughts of God. The image of every flower was in the mind of the Creator before creation. He *designed* the lilies of the field and the glorious company of their kindred.

III. The lilies of the field are God's workmanship. In the fine arts the conceiver is the worker. In other departments one designs and plans, and others execute. Flowers are the work of God's fingers.

IV. The lilies of the field are God's care. This is not manifest to the eye of the body. No man, like Adam, has seen or heard the Lord God in any garden. In the providential

sense there are no wild flowers. There are children without father and mother, or with evil fathers and mothers, but there are no flowers without Divine care.

V. The lilies of the field exhibit God's bountifulness. All flowers, alike of the field and of the garden, render some ordinary service—are of some use. They furnish food, medicine, clothing, shelter, to innumerable living things. But are they not created, in part at least, to be pleasant to the eye? Surely they are made to be things of beauty and sources of joy.

VI. The lilies of the field are propagated and developed by the working of various natural laws. There is a tendency in some minds to look only on the hard and rigorous side of law. But law is good. The moral law of God obeyed will bring forth nothing but love.

VII. The lilies of the field are parts of a perfect whole.

VIII. The lilies of the field show us a sense of beauty in the nature of God, and a satisfaction in its expression.

IX. The lilies of the field are what they are through various affinities and relationships. They are the children of the sun, of the rain, of the dew, and of the air. In this condition of floral life we see one of the conditions of our own existence.

X. The lilies of the field are supposed to find in the nature of man that which will respond to their attractiveness.

XI. The lilies may teach us freedom from care, and from morbid self-consciousness.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 28.

I. WE know that at the creation of the world "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." Some of the works, then, of the visible creation were good because they were useful and necessary, and because the life of man could not be supported without them; others were good because they were full of beauty, and, as objects for the eye, imparted the greatest pleasure and delight to beings who were endowed with reason, and who were gifted with the perceptions whereby they could discern this beauty. It is of these latter objects of nature that our Lord speaks on the occasion mentioned in the text. We ought then to be able to rejoice in those parts of the creation which were designed especially to give us delight. The admiration of God's natural creation is not an earthly, but an exalted and a pure delight. It is a joy fit for spiritual beings, who are admitted to the knowledge of God and the adoration of His goodness and glory.

II. The lower kind of pleasure, which thoughtless and unreflecting people sometimes derive from the beauties of visible nature, is not accompanied by any thought about the human soul itself, which is the perceiver of it; it does not bring up any solemn thought about themselves as thus admitted to this insight into Divine order and beauty. The proper delight in visible nature sends men to the thought of themselves and their own souls. And this is the very direction taken in our Lord's observations upon nature as given in the text. He immediately goes from external nature to the human soul; He reminds us how precious a thing the human soul is, how high its rank is in God's sight, how vast its interests are, how glorious its prospects. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" This is the lesson in which His discourse upon nature ends—the great truth of the worth and value of the human soul, its great superiority above all other things in this world; the supremacy it holds in the created universe.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 151.

CONSIDER the lilies. There is ample opportunity to do so. Flowers stay with us, rooted in the earth. Consider; that is, think of this beauty, see what you make of it. The word itself indicates at once the great stress laid by our Lord on the teachings of nature. Our text has two sides: a negative and a positive—what the plant does not, what it does.

I. *Negative*: "They toil not, neither do they spin," etc. (1) Here is a wonderful and beautiful effect, without care or anxious toil. (2) The lilies do not attempt what is impossible. They do what they can; they were never made to toil or spin; yet wait a few months, and a blossom is quietly matured that all the striving and curious ingenuity of man can, at the best, but distantly imitate.

II. Consider the lilies, how they grow. (1) Growth, for the most part, is secret; it is work done at the heart of things—work within, and not on the outside. (2) Growth is an unfolding. As the beauty of the flower is unfolded by the creating spirit from within, so all true beauty of heart, moral and spiritual beauty, so all real adornment of human nature, must unfold by the same almighty power from within.

G. WALKER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 166.

REFERENCES: vi. 28, 29.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World*

*Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 37; E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 199. vi. 30.—H. P. Liddon, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 11.

**Chap. vi., vers. 31, 32.**

I. THERE is a kind of low-toned care which is heard, as it were, in the distance, surging and moaning as it breaks upon the shore of human life; and many a man's music is this melancholy dirge or undertone of human life. Those that have it not are often called children of levity, and those that have it are often called serious, sober, earnest, religious people. Now, our Master tells us that this particular form of mental activity is useless—that nothing good ever comes of it. He who works in a spirit of fear and solicitude and anxiety doubles and trebles the laboriousness of labour.

II. Not only does this spirit of reprehensible care make the burdens of life heavier and the experiences of life sadder, but it converts one of the most joy-inspiring of our faculties into a minister of misery. The element of faith, that which we call imagination, the peculiar constitution of the understanding by which it brings home to itself things invisible, that power of the mind by which the whole of our life is largely opened into the future—this is perverted by care.

III. Then another ill-effect is that it takes away good-nature. Good-nature is the generic form which is produced by all the Christian graces. As light is white, although it is made up of all the other coloured rays, so I think hope and love and joy and peace, mingled together, make good-nature. A man who has good health and good-nature, and is a good man through and through, asks no favours of fortune and asks none of God; he asks only that he may be grateful to God for such blessings. And there is nothing that pecks at a fair life, and scratches its brilliant surface and undermines it, sooner than this anxious care. It is a sort of south-east wind of the soul, that does not rain, but chills everything.

IV. No craven-hearted man was ever fit to be a citizen. Courage is the source of patriotism. In looking upon the commonwealth, believe in providence, believe in God, believe in the blessedness of the future.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 252.

REFERENCE: vi. 31-33.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 203.

**Chap. vi., ver. 32.—"For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."**

I. In every suffering of body or mind the eternal God knows and measures most exactly our afflictions, be they what they may, great or small. The doctrine was known of old to the Psalmist, and was evidently a great and solid comfort to him. But it was most expressly declared by our Saviour Christ Himself: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." As much as to say, It is not that God is ignorant of man's distresses, or that, knowing them, He is indifferent about them; but He has good reasons for sending such and such afflictions on such and such persons. If they are truly wise, they will take them, as sent by Him, with constancy, penitence, and hope; if vain and self-willed, they will fret and disturb themselves with useless anxieties, and be in the end nothing the better for what their compassionate Father meant to be of the greatest good to them.

II. But it will be said, If God sees His faithful servants in affliction, and knows what things they have need of, why does not He, the Father of mercy, listen to their supplications and supply their wants? To this what can we answer? Can we say any of us that we *are* faithful servants—so faithful as to deserve His blessings, so diligent as not to deserve His chastisements? Can any of us venture to say this of ourselves? Besides, we do not know what reasons God may have for afflicting us. Some of these reasons may be plain to a considerate person, but there may be others beyond our reach.

III. Let us bear in mind that we are not placed in the world to enjoy ourselves, but to be exercised and disciplined in order to our admission to a world of real enjoyment, lasting happiness, eternal rest. Let our life be a life of prayer, of constant aspirations after the aid of the Holy Spirit, without which we cannot but fall, without which we have no strength.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 109.

Anxiety must be a sin. And it must be a sin very deep in the heart. So large a portion of the Sermon on the Mount would never have been directed against anxiety, and so many arguments would not have been heaped up, if the sin were not very large and its grasp very wide.

I. Anxiety does two things. (1) It makes you unhappy, and unhappiness is not a matter for pity, it is a matter for blame. For whoever is unhappy and disquieted is, in so far, unfitted

for the duties of life—he can do nothing as he ought to do. And, as far as he is concerned, he is frustrating the purposes of Almighty God, for the design of God was a happy creation. (2) Every shade of anxiety which passes over a man's mind is a positive wrong done to God,—it distrusts Him; it sets aside one of His attributes, it gives the lie to one of His promises.

II. The whole stress of Christ's argument rests on the fatherly character of God. We live in our great Father's house, and may look on all the treasures in His creation; we may go up and down in the immensity of the universe; we may travel for ever and ever among the promises; we may survey all the bounties of the vast profusion of God's grace in Christ Jesus,—and they are all for the children. You may read it written on all the host of them, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

III. Remember, that you may expect God to supply your wants as bountifully as He supplies the birds—but on the same condition. The birds work from morning to night; they have not a grain but they have sought it, and sought it with patient labour. But if you do this, and still the untrodden path of your future life looks dark, and every to-morrow wraps itself in a thick cloud, do not be afraid, only believe. The same act which made you a child of God pledged Him, as your heavenly Father, to supply all you want for body and soul.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 169.

REFERENCE: vi. 32, 33.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 93.

Chap. vi., ver. 33.—"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

PROSPERITY shall follow true piety. When it is said "Seek first" it means first in both senses of the term—first in time, and first in emphasis. The intensity is on both of them combined. Aim mainly at the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all the proper ends which you seek in this world shall be added to you—that is the statement.

I. Now, what is this righteousness? What is this kingdom? The Old Testament is full of the doctrine of righteousness; and nowhere in the New Testament is that doctrine, as it is enunciated in the Old Testament, rebuked. The methods of seeking after gain are there criticized, but the ideal of manliness in body, in affection, in soul, in understanding, as it was held by the riper minds of the Old Testament dispensation—manliness as the effect of striving for God's Spirit with

our natural faculties—that ideal of the Old Testament not only never was rebuked, but was adopted by the New Testament. He who, as first in importance, as first in his purpose, and as first in time, seeks to establish in himself a true Christian manliness, giving it the precedence from the beginning of his life clear down to the end, shall have all these other things added to him.

II. True piety, moderation of desire, restraint of appetite, and the unfolding of these sweeter affections which are developed by faith and the love of God, tends, (1) to make true *health*, which is the primitive, original, first element of success in life; (2) true piety, with its control over the passions, whereby it holds them in and harnesses them, prevents the waste which destroys men who give themselves the swing of full indulgence in passion. (3) The element of success in life is largely founded on good judgment, good "common sense." True piety tends to give this. (4) There is another element in the success of life—justice. Men that are just are always men who have a considerable regard for the rights of other people, and are sensitive to them. The man who keeps about him a clear atmosphere of benevolence, and lives in the true spirit of the Gospel, which says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," and is concerned for the prosperity of those who are round about him, and is not swallowed up by his own prosperity—he is gradually being prepared for success in life.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 164.

THE whole thought hinges upon a point of order. Indeed, all religion, practically, is a point of order. The Christian places heaven first, and this world in a very distant second. To the man of secular mind this world is always large in the foreground; while the life to come is far-off, dim, and unreal in the distance.

I. The important word in the text is "first." For if we set aside the very ungodly, there are very few who do not seek, or who do not at some time or other mean to seek, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. He who knew the heart as none other ever knew it, He saw the necessity of this precept. And the reason of all the disappointment and all the unhappiness which there is in this world is, that that great precept of order is not kept.

II. The kingdom of God is an empire with three provinces. One province is a man's own heart, when the throne of Christ

is once really set up in it; another province is the Church, as it is set up on earth; and another is that final and magnificent condition of all things when Christ shall come and reign in His glory. There are, then, before every one, these three primary objects: the first is to have the whole of his heart in subjugation to God; the second is to extend the Church; and the third is to long, and pray for, and help on the Second Advent. To strive after these things is to seek the kingdom of God.

III. What is God's righteousness? There is a righteousness such as that in which man was originally made upright—a righteousness which consists in the due sense and performance of all the relative duties which we owe to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow-creatures. There is a righteousness which is a part of the character of God, whereby it is now become a just thing with God to save those for whom Jesus died. And there is a righteousness composed of all the perfections of the life of Christ, which is given to every one that believes. This triple righteousness is what every good man is seeking after. First, something which will justify him before God, and then something which will justify him to his own conscience and to the world in believing that he is justified before God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 286.

REFERENCES: vi. 33.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,864; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 402; vol. viii., p. 64; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 388; J. M. Wilson, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 113; F. O. Morris, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 188; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,959; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. i., p. 283; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thoughts*, vol. i., p. 17.

**Chap. vi., ver. 34.—"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."**

I. IN considering this text the question naturally arises, Is not the Christian character essentially a provident one? Is it not the very nature of the new life which is within us, that, taking all its interests and affections out of the present, as it passes, it throws them on to that which is coming, and always is living in the future? All this is perfectly true; and perhaps the very habit of a Christian's mind in looking always onwards has a tendency to make his temperament anxious. Every duty has its dangers; every height has its precipice; every light has its shadow. But this is true only of an early and imperfect religion. As a believer grows, his to-morrow becomes more

and more eternity. So it comes to pass that the very forethought of the Christian, which becomes the law and condition of his being, turns into the remedy for every unhappy disposition, and he takes no thought for the morrow, being engrossed in the thought of that never-ending eternity which lies before him.

II. Consider the benefit of living by the day. (1) As respects our pleasures. Just as snow-clad mountains in the distance give a distinctness to the nearer prospect, so every child of God knows well how the joy is heightened by the privilege of not having to dilute it by anxiety for any future good. (2) As respects our pains. It is the sorrow and the pain which are coming which are so hard to bear. The unknown and the undefined are always the largest weights; and in the same proportion suspense is always the greatest of evils. So that he has well-nigh found a panacea who has thoroughly imbued his mind with the truth of the text. It will be a sweet, a prevailing argument with God, every moment—"O Lord, think of me *this day;* for this is *that to-morrow* of which Thou didst command me not to think." And as you do this the yesterdays will become memory's witnesses to God's mind, and the to-morrows will be fields for faith's peaceful exercise.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 221.

I. THERE are two classes of persons who take no thought for the morrow. There are those who live heedlessly and giddily, absorbed in each new fancy or pleasure as it passes, without any definite aim or aspiration, and only free from anxiety because they are free from all serious thoughts whatever. There are also those who are careless for the morrow, because they are careful for to-day. They have a firm trust in God. They believe that every day is His, and that their powers are His, and that if every moment as it comes is given to Him, He will provide for the future. The first class may be said to be below anxiety, the second to be above it. It is very important to ask ourselves whether we are not in the first of these two classes. May it not be that even the reproofs, even the warnings and cautions of Christ presuppose a degree of strength to which we have not yet attained? Can it be that the words of the text speak with a certain *irony* to some of us?

II. Christ was speaking mainly to poor men. They were anxious, as the poor always are, about very simple things. They were anxious about food and clothing for themselves and

for their families. Christ addressed Himself to the special needs of those He saw before Him. How does He address Himself to ours? The *principle* of His admonition is, "Do not be anxious about the future. One thing is needful. Trust your Father in heaven to send you all other things." To those who fear they will not be able to hold out either in diligence or goodness, Christ says, "Take no thought for the morrow." Do right to-day. Make one thing clearly your first object. Seek to know and to do God's will, and then all other good things will be added unto you. Best of all good things, greater spiritual strength, a more habitual consciousness of Christ's presence, a truer delight in feeling, "I am His and He is mine;" a growing power of confessing Him before others, a growing impossibility of denying Him in anywise.

III. If we dream of what we shall do to-morrow, we shall do nothing to-day. We have read of sieges in which resistance was protracted day after day and week after week, with apparently scarcely a possibility of ultimate success. If we question the defenders, they tell us that they looked forward very little. The duties of each day, the hope of being able to know at the close of each evening "The city is still ours," were sufficiently absorbing, and did not allow the mind to be unnerved by the contemplation of the extreme improbability of final escape. If *our* warfare is to end triumphantly, if we are to hold out against temptation till relief comes, we must take counsel of this sober short-sightedness—this wise refusal to anticipate evil. "Give us *this day* our daily bread." Let this be our prayer for all wants of the body. "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us *this day* without sin." Let this be our simple prayer for all wants of the soul.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 108.

I. IT is most obvious that in these words Christ could not have meant to say, "Live only in the present; be forgetful of the future." His precepts direct men to think of the future. The whole tendency of Christianity is to produce the deepest thoughtfulness for the morrow, for its spirit prompts men to stand ever "with their loins girt and their lights burning"—ready alike for the coming trials of life and the change of death. It is evidently of the evil of the future that Christ is speaking, and, therefore, it is the anxious restlessness which springs from fear of that evil which He condemns. Regarding the words in this light, they present to us the Christian law of living: "Do

the day's work God gives you, bear the day's burden God sends you, and be not anxious about the evil which the morrow may bring."

II. In showing that this is both possible and necessary for the Christian man, we must regard this injunction as Christ here regards it, as flowing from faith. Faith may rise in three different ways, each of which seems to give it a different aspect. It may be intuitive, reflective, or submissive. In our hopeful moments it rises from the intuition of love; in our thoughtful hours it is the offspring of intellectual reflection, and when depressed and sorrowful it is the profound outgoing of trust in One who is stronger than we. (1) The highest faith is that which rises from the intuition of love, and the essential feature of such faith is this—that it thinks not of the future, but grasps eternity as a present reality. The necessary result of such faith is a defiance of life's evils, for the love of God, when realized in Christ, dares all futurity, and angels, and principalities, and powers to sunder it from God. It prevents our taking thought for the morrow. (2) Again, faith rises from reflection on the revelation of God. Is it possible that faith in a Father can exist with an anxious care for the morrow which makes the work of to-day restless and confused? The mighty calmness of nature shames our restlessness into repose. We cannot trace the Father in the glory of His universe, and yet disbelieve in the provision of His care for us. (3) Once more, faith rises from the conscious feebleness of man. Times of childlike trust and submission, arising from a sense of infirmity, help to the fulfilment of Christ's injunction, "Take no thought for the morrow." For the more powerfully we are conscious of our ignorance and helplessness, the more utterly can we leave the future in God's hands.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 52.

ON a Particular Providence.

I. Perhaps one of the most important uses of the Old Testament is, that it points out to us how clearly what the world calls chance is to be attributed to providential interposition. The veil is uplifted, and the finger of God is seen. It is true, indeed, that the word chance is used in Scripture, as in Eccles. ix. 11.; but there it is used to denote, not what infidels mean when they speak of chance, but merely such accidents as have occurred contrary to the expectations and designs of men, God Himself being mediately or immediately the cause.

II. The doctrine of a special providence lies between two extremes, as all truth does; between the system which denies to man any power, and that which refuses to recognize the occasional interference of the Deity.

III. Only let us from the heart believe in the special providence of God, and *then* no notion of expediency will induce us, in any single instance, to do evil that good may come; or, which is a greater trial, to fear to do good lest evil should ensue. The true Christian, strong in the faith of God's special providence, and he only, is the really consistent man, whom neither the frown of the tyrant, nor the preferments of the powerful, nor the flattery of the crafty can drive or allure from the narrow path; who can alike defy lawless power and public opinion—that is, the opinion of the thoughtless many, as opposed to the truth possessed by the thoughtful few; he only can resolutely oppose the spirit of the age, when the spirit of the age is not in accordance with the Spirit of God.

IV. See the influence of the doctrine of a special providence on the duty of prayer. If we believe that God *does* sometimes interfere and interpose, under circumstances apparently the most trivial, we shall most assuredly *pray* to God, whenever we have any object at heart, that by His good providence our exertions may be rendered successful; we shall feel that whatever is worthy of our labour is worthy of our prayers; and prayer will thus sanctify our actions, while our energy of action will give incitement to our prayers.

W. F. HOOK, *Sermons on Various Subjects*, p. 25.

I. CHRIST'S thought in the text, as I imagine it, is this: As the birds and the flowers, in a sort of necessary way, keep the laws of their nature, under the kindly care of their Father, all their wants are met; they sing and feed, they bloom and live out their brief lives in glad perfection. But the secret of it lies in their unconscious obedience to the laws of their being; it is in obedience that the watchful care of God is realized. Hence, when Christ comes to apply the matter to men, He introduces the condition. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and food and drink and raiment will follow. He by no means says, Live as careless as a bird; but rather, Be as true to your law of righteousness as a bird is to the law of its condition, and you may be as free from anxiety.

II. Christ does not here hold us back from forethought and care, and even a sort of anxiety. Seek, He says, first and always;

and no seeking, no search, worthy of the name, can be made without care. The matter turns, then, on the thing that is to engage our thought and care. Not meat and drink and raiment; not the things the Gentiles seek after. Let your search be after righteousness. Put your solicitude, your careful thought, your strife, where they belong—in the realm of righteous obedience—and there will be no occasion for anxiety elsewhere.

III. Christ takes pains to tell us why and how we may trust. His reasons are as solid as the world, as sure as the process of nature, as true as God Himself. (1) We are put into the sure order of nature, and this order is one of supply of wants. (2) We are put under a law of righteousness, and this law also works towards a supply of wants. (*a*) A righteous man, by the habit and law of his being, sows seed for the bread of to-morrow. (*b*) Righteousness puts a man into such relations to his fellow-men that it builds for him houses of habitation for all his mortal years.

IV. Why does Christ in this inaugural discourse devote so much time to such a matter as anxiety—a thing that hardly comes within the range of morals? He treated it as a matter of great importance: (1) because it is a source of great unhappiness; (2) to create an atmosphere of peace about the soul.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Appeal to Life*, p. 149.

IN regard to the future, there are two wrong feelings which we are apt to cherish. There is the feeling of over-confidence, the feeling which results in what the old proverb warns us against, "boasting one's self of the morrow." And there is the opposite extreme—the feeling of anxiety, of distrust, of fear, which shows itself in dark forebodings of the future. It is this second extreme our Lord admonishes us to avoid.

I. There is the testimony of life. However trying your circumstances may be, your life is a witness that you are not forsaken by God. Next to Christ, life is the supreme gift of the Creator. And it is life pre-eminently which announces His presence.

II. Whatever your circumstances may be, the minutest of them is under the power of God. Our Lord introduces us to the blessed fact that no creature is unimportant in His sight. "Behold the fowls of the air," He says: for "they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." God's providence is indeed broad and universal in its plans, and it does work in great tracts and circles of toil;

but it finds room and time to visit the nest and supply the table of every sparrow that chirps upon the hedge. Hear the gospel of the birds.

III. Whatever sorrow or distress there may be in your lot, God is abler to help than you yourself are, and His way of helping is better than your own. Do not doubt the power, or the pity, or the care of God. And do not cherish the evil thought that your own ordering of your affairs would be better. He who crowns the lily with its glory can supply you, if you will patiently wait for it at His hands, with a blessedness which can never be taken away.

IV. He who best knows the reality, who came down from heaven to tell us what is in God, gave us the assurance of a Father. God is our Father, and we are bound to trust Him with the trustfulness of a child, and we are free to expect from Him a child's inheritance.

V. Be not, then, wistful about the future; be not filled with anxieties about the morrow. If you have made this loving God your soul's dwelling-place, no evil can come near you. "The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing."

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 119.

To accept this saying as a rule of life makes life easier, and it makes work for others surer, wiser, better, and more joyous.

I. Put your whole force into the work of to-day, not troubling about the next day. If you do that, you will not at least be troubled by the anxieties about work which ought to have been done in the past, and you will be free from all back trouble when the morrow comes. And if it is duty you do, it will arrange itself rightly in the world, for others and for you. It is true you may fail, but God will not allow our failure to bring ruin to the cause of man, though it may spoil our own life for a time. But even then there is so much time before us that we need not despair. In kindlier weather, in a brighter world, we may repair the past, resume the half-written life, re-knit the broken web, accomplish the love which duty here forbade. For we abide for ever, and we have a Father who will not let us fail for ever.

II. It is plain that when Christ said, "Take no thought for the morrow," He did not mean that to embrace the whole of life, or of His teaching on the subject. He did not mean, do not work in the present for the future, but do not spoil your

work in the present by over-care for a future not in your own hands; He did not mean, do not look forward for yourself, nor consider how your acts now will bear on time to come; but He did mean, do not let anxiety, care for meat and drink and the visible things of life, so crowd and disturb your mind that you cannot give that free, wise, sober, unfearful consideration to the education of yourself, your children, your nation, and mankind that is most noble in a man. He did not mean, think only of yourself and your joy, but have your view so free from self-trouble that you may think for others, your life so full of joyous freedom that you may be able to act with unfettered energy for others.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 68.

REFERENCES: vi. 34.—T. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 195; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 244; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 193; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 367; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 325; C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 365; *Ibid.*, *The Good News of God*, p. 276; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. i., p. 265. vi. 35.—J. Vaughan, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 11.

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Chap. vii., vers. 1-6.

THE law kept by sympathy. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." This word of Christ's implies—

I. That we are not to be eager to spy out our neighbour's faults, for that is not worthy, not Christian, not fulfilling the law of God. The more vigilant we are over him, the more careless we are of ourselves. The less we spare his faults, the more tender we grow of our own. The men who are most censorious are just the very men who are themselves the least faultless, the most indulgent to their own cherished sins.

II. That neither are we to speak hastily of the sins of our neighbour. A readiness to spy out faults is one thing; it is another thing to be eager to speak of them and point them out to others. The two things are generally combined. And this is indeed the mischief of that kind of character, that it seldom, if ever, refrains from proclaiming the faults which it is so prone to discover, reckless of the pain or the injury which it may thus inflict; were it otherwise, the evil resulting from such a habit would be mainly limited to the man himself who indulged in it.

III. This implies also that we are to watch against that uncharitable spirit which is ever ready to ascribe the worst meanings and the worst motives to our neighbour's conduct. If

there is any moral duty which, more than another, stands out as the very badge and symbol of Christianity, it is charity.

IV. In all such matters we must be regulated by the great law of moral sympathy, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Judge not your neighbour in a way in which you would not like him to judge you. Do not spy out his faults in a fashion which you would consider unkind and ungenerous if done to yourself; do not talk of his errors as you would feel it unfair to have your own discussed and babbled about; do not ascribe base motives and wicked meanings to him, which you would hold to be unjust if ascribed to you. So do ye to others whatsoever ye would that they should do to you.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 276.

REFERENCES: vii. 1.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 42; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 27. vii. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 172. vii. 1-6.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 234; J. Oswald Dykes, *Manifesto of the King*, p. 529.

**Chap. vii., ver. 2.—"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."**

THE New Testament is full of a natural and necessary reciprocity between man and the things by which he is surrounded. Every gift has its return, every act has its consequence, every call has its answer in this great, live, alert world, where man stands central, and all things have their eyes on him, and their ears open to his voice.

I. Even with man's relations to the material earth this law is true. "They treated nature as they would." So all men—all races—treat nature according to their wills, whether their wills be the deep utterance of their characters, or only the light and fickle impulses of self-indulgence. And what they are to nature, nature is to them—to one man the siren, who fascinates him to drunkenness and death; to another the wise friend, who teaches him all lessons of self-restraint and sobriety, and patient hope and work.

II. But after all, our relations to the world of nature are little more than illustrations of our relations to the world of men. Let us see how true the law which we are looking at is there. I think there grows in us a strong conviction with our growing years that for a man to get bad out of the world of fellow-men is not necessarily a disgrace to the world of fellow-men, but is certainly a disgrace to him. There are men in the world to-day

who are being made worse by living with the best and purest. Souls are darker for the sunshine, souls are colder for the warmth, with which they live in daily company. And why? Because heaven does not make holiness, but holiness makes heaven; because if you do not give yourself in sympathy to goodness, goodness cannot give itself in influence to you; because with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you. Each man gets out of the world of men the rebound, the increase and development of what he brings there.

III. And now in that great giving in, that supreme self-consecration, does our law still hold? Indeed it does. Nowhere does it so completely hold. For there are different measures in which men give themselves to Christ, and Christ despises none of them, but in different measures He again is compelled to give Himself back to them. With what measure each gives himself to the Saviour, the Saviour gives Himself in His salvation back to each. As when in some foreign land, in some strange shrine of Romish or Pagan worship, all glorious with art, all blazing with the light of precious stones, there bend around the altar the true devotees who believe with all their souls; while at the door, with heads uncovered and with faces solemnized by the presence of a ceremony in which they do not believe and in which they take no part, lingers a group of travellers full of joy at the wondrous beauty of the place; and as when the music ceases and the lights go out they go away, each carrying what it was in him to receive—the devotee his spiritual peace, the artistic tourist his spiritual joy; so men bestow themselves on Christ, and by the selves that they bestow on Him the giving of Himself to them must of necessity be measured.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons in English Churches*, p. 265.

REFERENCES: vii. 3-5.—S. COX, *An Expositor's Notebook*, p. 266. vii. 6.—*Ibid.*, p. 279.

**Chap. vii., vers. 6, 12.—"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine," etc.**

CONSIDER—I. The reserve which will not give things holy to dogs. The dog was reckoned, with the swine, among the unclean animals. They were both of them types of the grossly sensual kind of sinners, given over to mere brute appetite, and insensible to any higher life. Hence it was a common saying, "Without are dogs," to indicate the general carnality of the Gentile world. Things holy belong to the holy, or at any rate

to those who recognize them to be holy, and will treat them, therefore, with the reverence which is their due. We are bound to act so that these sacred things shall not be despised, and that our good shall not be evil spoken of, and that we shall not needlessly arouse the opposition and hatred to spiritual concerns which these carnal minds are so ready to indulge in.

II. There is also a similar reserve with regard to things precious: "Neither cast your pearls before swine." The things precious, indicated by pearls, may be also, no doubt, very sacred, but they do not belong to the holy privacies of religious life. On the contrary, they are meant for use and free circulation; for by the pearls I understand chiefly the truths of the Gospel. This second proverb implies that even in the performance of the great Christian duty of preaching the Gospel there is still left room for some discretion and reserve, lest by unwise speech we bring dishonour on the truth and needless persecution on ourselves. These two things must combine ere we shall be justified in keeping silence.

III. For our practical guidance in such matters it seems to me we must always read these words in the light of the great principle, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." That is to say, it is our duty in certain cases to consider how we ourselves would like it if the truth were forced on our attention at such a time, or in such a way, as to provoke our opposition to it, and lead us into sinful rejection of its claims.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 292.

Chap. vii., ver. 7.—"Seek, and ye shall find."

GOD is not only a great Giver, but He is sometimes a great Hider of His gifts. The subject to which the text applies pre-eminently, as the context shows, is the matter of the soul's welfare, and the things that accompany salvation. The promise is not, "Seek, health and ye shall find it. Seek fame, seek fortune, and ye shall find them;" but the whole discourse bears on the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, and the promise of the true and faithful witness is tantamount to this: "Seek God, and ye shall find Him. Seek His friendship, and He will not refuse it. Seek the Holy Spirit, and He will not withhold it."

I. Seek knowledge. To true religion a pre-requisite is a certain measure of enlightenment.

II. More especially, as comprehending the best knowledge,

and as the most effectual means at once of reassurance Godward and of all progress in goodness, seek the Saviour. Seek not only to know about Him, but seek confidence in Him; seek to know Him as your own. Come boldly to the throne of grace; come, and you will obtain mercy now, and will find help in all your future times of need.

III Seek certainty. Give all diligence so as to attain a full assurance of sin forgiven, and of your own acceptance in the Saviour. Dark shadows of apostasy will flit across your path, and your energies will be paralyzed by dreary forebodings. So cry to the Captain of salvation to deliver you from the hand of this enemy, and as for life, as for heaven, watch against his furious onsets or sudden surprises. And if you have any doubt as to the reality of your religion, solve the doubt by becoming definite and decisive now. You know who is the rightful claimant of your services; therefore, take up the cross, deny yourself, and follow Christ.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 351.

I. IN considering these words I would first inquire to whom such exhortations are rightly addressed. Now, it is to be remembered that these words occur in that great discourse of our Lord's which is called the Sermon on the Mount. And for the right understanding of that great embodiment of Christian morality, and of its relations to the whole body of Christian truth, it is, I think, very needful to remember that the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to Christ's disciples, that it presupposes discipleship and entrance into the kingdom, and has not a word to say about the method of entrance.

II. Consider in what region of life these promises are true They sound at first as if they were dead in the teeth of the facts of life. Is there any region of experience in which to ask is to receive, to seek is to find, and in which every door flies open at our touch? If there be, it is not in the ordinary workaday world that you and I live in, where we all have to put up with a great many bitter disappointments and refused requests, where we have all searched long and sorely for some things which we have not found, and the search has aged and saddened us. But yet it seems that the distinct purpose of our Lord is to assert that the law of His Kingdom is the direct opposite of the law of earthly life, and that the sad discrepancy between desire and possession, between wish and fact, are done away with for His followers. The region in which we receive this great and

liberal charter of entire response to our desires is simply and only the spiritual region in which the highest good is.

III. Note on what conditions the promise depends. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 20th, 1884.

REFERENCES: vii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 340; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., pp. 29, 71; S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 146; H. M. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 33.

**Chap. vii., vers. 7, 8.—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," etc.**

I. WE have in these words, not a formal definition of prayer, but an incidental definition of prayer, and a most complete definition. We have it in the little word "ask." To pray to God is to ask of God. "Ask," said Christ; and the more simple and childlike the asking the better.

II. We have here a recognition of the hindrances which we meet in prayer. The blessings that we want are sometimes visible in God's hands; God seems to be standing before us with the very mercies that we require, holding them out to us—then "ask." But mercies are sometimes hid, as in God's treasures—then "seek." The blessings are sometimes deposited, as in holy places—then "knock." In one word, instead of being hindered by hindrances to prayer—"ask"—"seek"—"knock."

III. Observe, there is here a positive injunction. The text is not, you may pray, but "ask." Prayer is not optional. I *must* pray, if I be a true disciple, and if I be an obedient child; and if I cannot pray with these eyes open, regarding prayer as a privilege, then I must pray as a duty.

IV. Christ stimulates to obedience by words of encouragement. (1) In the first place, He calls attention to universal experience. "*Every one* that asketh receiveth." (2) As a further encouragement, Christ points to the conduct of parents towards their children. (3) Christ gives force to His illustration by a gentle reference to our common depravity. "If ye then, being evil." The very incidental nature of the recognition of our sinfulness shows how constantly it was before Christ, and how much He thought of it.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 20.

THE Strength of Wishes.

The text certifies in truth to the power of strong wishes. Asking, seeking, knocking—all these express earnest wishes of the heart, which have put themselves in the shape of addresses to God. If we do not become believing or serious Christians, Scripture says it is because we have no real wish to become so. We do not ask, or seek, or knock: if we did we should obtain.

I. Think of the keenness and force of the wishes we form with respect to various temporal advantages, whether of mind or outward fortune. The sight of success in any human faculties, in any particular kind of address, or in science or art, or manner, stirs up at once the natural emulation of the human heart, and sets men thinking and dreaming of it and wishing it for themselves. Who can live in the world without becoming aware that the very air which surrounds him is cut through in all directions by wishes—eager, impetuous wishes; wishes happy or sad, according as they promise or not their own fulfilment.

II. What, then, if people, instead of wishing for art, or quickness, or dexterity, or other such gifts, with that sharpness of desire they do, could from the heart wish that they were religious—the teaching of Scripture is that the strong wish for this state of mind will be itself the means of obtaining it. Only wish for this temper really and steadily, and your wish will fulfil itself. Wish devoutly, not as if your own will and power could accomplish the wish, but under a deep sense of the power of God to work what He will within us, and to move us from the bottom of our hearts to good, and your wish will be fulfilled. Religion, while it promises so much, takes high ground in its conditions; it must be felt as the first want, as an imperious need of the soul; otherwise the wish for it does nothing and has no power. So deep is the instinctive feeling in the human mind of the power of a real wish in spiritual things, that a worldly man rejects it and puts it from him, as if it would be only too sure to effect the change in him if it stayed; and he does not want to be changed.

J. B. MOZLEY, *University Sermons*, p. 213.

REFERENCE: vii. 7, 8.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 57.

Chap. vii., vers. 7-11.

I. OUR Lord enjoins us here to pray; and He assures us that we shall not pray in vain. It does not indeed follow that

God will grant any and every thing we may choose to ask; for there are some things which, without irreverence, we may truly say, it is impossible for Him to bestow. But our Lord's words do involve that prayer is not merely effectual in producing a devout frame of mind, but also in securing, to some extent, the object of our requests. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But—

II. For the perfect assurance of our minds on this subject, it is to be remembered that this whole question rests on the Fatherhood of God; and unless we hold fast by that, the grace and truth of our Lord's saying here will soon vanish from our minds. For unless we come in the faith and love of children to their Father, we might as well be dumb, like the prayerless atheist, who holds the throne of heaven to be vacant and impotent, as indeed it virtually is if there be not a Father there to hear us.

III. While prayer is thus effectual because it is made to a Father who feels with us and is willing to help us, we are not to suppose that everything we ask of Him shall be given to us, neither should we murmur when our requests are refused. It is well to ask of Him, but not to dictate to Him. He will withhold no good thing from them that fear Him, but then He knows better than we do what it is good to give; and sometimes the best answer to our requests is in reality to deny them. We are but as children here, ignorant of the real qualities of many things, taken with the glitter of others, and likely enough to ask for a boon what would be far from a blessing. Therefore it behoves us ever to school our hearts to say, "Not as we will, but as Thou wilt."

IV. In order to be effectual, our prayers must be real; but for the highest efficacy, they must be both real and also spiritual. God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He will not give you something else in reply to that petition; for that is a boon which can never be amiss.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 256.

REFERENCES: vii. 7-12.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 245. vii. 7-14.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 551. vii. 8.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, vol. iv., p. 60.

Chap. vii., ver. 9.

SHAM Immortality.

I. So much is there in the Christian doctrine of immortality that captivates the imagination and touches the heart, that the apostles of unbelief are constrained to find a substitute

for it, and they preach an immortality in words which are anointed with the unction of the pulpit. But all that is true in their doctrine has been a conscious Christian possession, and I may say a human possession, since men became capable of reflection; and all that is new is the sight of infidelity strutting in garments stolen from Christianity. They teach that the dead live on in those who come after them, that the dead have a real place in succeeding generations, and make them what they are; that the dead are the true rulers of the present, and are often more powerful than when they were alive. When they say that "the dead are still living round us, and are as active as ever they were in life," they do not mean by living what men usually mean. For they do not believe in the immortality of the soul—that is, in the continued existence of the conscious, rational being, of that unity we call the ego or self. Their "raptures conjured up to serve occasion of poetic pomp" simply come to this—conduct of every kind has its consequences, and these consequences reach to future generations. If there is no other immortality than this, that a man's conduct will continue to have its effects in the future, it is for the greater part of mankind an immortality which is uninspiring, and for many an immortality of hopeless night.

II. How insignificant must be the effect of a single life such as that lived by thousands and millions of human beings, on the next generations. When we remember that if every act has its persisting effects, then our bad acts, our silly acts, our mean acts, have their effects, their immortality, just as our good ones have. There cannot be much inspiration in the immortality of our vices and follies. If this is to be the life to come, we may well wish for a great sword long enough to smite the future, and strong enough to strike off the heads of the offspring which will bear our names.

W. PAGE ROBERTS, *Liberalism in Religion*, p. 112.

REFERENCES: vii. 9-11.—J. H. Jellett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 158; J. Burton, *Sermons on Christian Life and Truth*, p. 121.

Chap. vii., ver. 11.—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

IN our text Christ tells us what we are to expect of God, in His treatment of us. There is mystery about God's nature; we

cannot fathom it, and as God is thus mysterious, our kind Redeemer takes something that all men will know. He appeals to feelings that are lacking in very few human hearts. He goes to the love and care of parents for their child, and He says if you want to know how God feels towards you, and how ready God is to give you everything that is really good, here is something to go by. God feels towards each of us as a kind and wise father feels towards his child; and the difference is just this, that God, our Father in heaven, is infinitely better than the very best earthly father.

II. These points of superiority are so plain and simple that they need very little illustration. (1) For one thing, God knows what is good for us, as no human parent can know what is good for his child. (2) Another point in which appears the superiority of the great Father, to whom Christ points as above all earthly parents, is His power. He is able to do all He wishes. He has all power to give us all good things, to help and save. (3) Then God is always kind. There are unnatural parents; let us hope very few: "They may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (4) Our heavenly Father excels the best earthly one, in that He is always near; always within hearing; always within reach; never leaving, never forsaking; Father of the fatherless, Friend of the friendless; yea, "when father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

A. K. H. B., *Grave Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 1st series, p. 18.

I. Look first at the relationship of the father to the child. Christ takes as the basis of His argument the relation of the father on earth to the child on earth. Amongst all the affections of the world there is none like it, because this alone is free from the imputation or the suspicion of selfishness. Here, out of the wreck and ruin of humanity, there emerges this one affection, strongly triumphant amidst all circumstances that have tested it. This it is which is purest and strongest; and Christ says, "Even more than that is the love of the great Father towards you."

II. Can you not trust in the loving-kindness of God for that? Can you not believe that when He selects that title He is your Father, that He meant you to realize it, that He intended that you should not simply say it, but meant it to be a fact? Not alone are you to say that as there is a father in every human family, so probably there may be a fatherly feeling on the part of the great God in heaven towards His children. God rather

wishes you to reverse the thought, and say that He gave you this in life, which is only a shadow after all of the fatherly relationship, that you might in that shadow learn the realities of heaven.

III. Therefore, also, we must learn to trust the wisdom of that parent. If we, as His children, receive sometimes in answer to our prayers that which we are tempted to think is a stone, we must learn to think that though the bread may be as hard even as a stone, it is still bread, sustaining bread; for we cannot doubt, knowing the Father's loving purposes, that His wisdom surpasses ours, and that He gives what we really need.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 177.

REFERENCES: vii. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 93; W. Gladden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 200; J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 128.

Chap. vii., ver. 12.—"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

I. IF we look into this precept more closely, and discuss the ground upon which love to our neighbours appears to be made dependent, an objection may be raised which is worth while to notice. The objection is this, that the rule of brotherly love is apparently made by the text a selfish rule; that is, that our conduct towards others appears to be made to rest upon their conduct towards ourselves. To which it may be at once answered, that any notion of limiting our kindness to others by the kindness of others towards ourselves, could never, for one moment, have been harboured in the mind of Him who bids us love our enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, after the example of our Father in heaven; who is kind to the unthankful and the ignorant, and makes His sun to shine upon the just and unjust. In this rule our Lord neither recognizes nor fosters any feeling of selfishness properly so called. He only refers to a method of measuring the character of our actions which we may easily perceive to be the only method by which our actions can be estimated aright.

II. He who prefers to this golden rule the harsher rule of leaving every one to take care of himself, of seeking in all things our own advantage, and leaving others to do the same, can hardly remember that parable of our Lord concerning the

hard-hearted servant—he who had been forgiven a thousand talents laying hands upon his brother, who owed him "an hundred pence." He had a right to the money—well—but would he have thought the right to have been one which ought to be exercised had he been the debtor instead of the creditor? *That* was the point which he ought to have considered; *there* comes in the application of Christ's golden rule.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 6th series, p. 196.

I. CONSIDER the precept itself, and the limitations with which it is to be understood, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Here is the great Gospel legislation, and no rule, it would seem, could be more simple to comprehend or more easy to apply; for in considering how we ought to act towards any person we are just to imagine that we change places with him. We are to be what he is, and he is to be what we are; and this transfer of conditions being mentally made, we are to give just so much as we should like to take, and withhold whatever we would wish to have refused. "Whatsoever ye would." But how if ye would do something which is not right and not reasonable and not consistent, if generally carried out, with the interests and well-being of human society—would the rule of our text apply then? Clearly not. A judge, administering the laws of his country, knows very well that if he were in the situation of the prisoner there is nothing which he would desire so much as an acquittal. Must he, therefore, pronounce nothing but pardons? A bold beggar comes to a rich man for alms. Imagine a reversal of their positions, and the rule of doing as you would be done by would require that the rich man should give up the half of his property. These and similar cases, arising out of the necessary dependences and relationships of social life, sufficiently evidence that the rule of our text is to be received with a certain understood limitation, and imply that it is not what we do, or might wish others to do to us, that is to be the gauge of our conduct to them, but only what, according to the principles of equity and fairness and right, we ought to wish.

II. Consider the excellence of this rule, and the grounds on which it claims the respect and homage of mankind. These are (1) its reasonableness, as founded on the original equality of all men one with another; (2) its capability of easy and immediate application; (3) the kindness and beneficence of such rule in relation to ourselves. Self-love itself has made God's

standard of Gospel morality: "Love thy neighbour as thyself, and all that the Lord thy God hath required of thee is done."

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,046.

SOMETHING like this golden rule was contained in the old writings of the Jews, but mark that wonderful discrimination and wisdom of Jesus, that He should have seized upon it, that He should have taken it out of the great mass of their writings and traditions; that He should have seized upon it and brought it out. With them it was but a negative; now, they said, if there is anything that you do not like, that is very hateful to you, do not do that to another. Jesus Christ comes with the positive, and tells us about the doing: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should *do* to you, *do* ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

I. Observe, the teaching of the New Testament is a teaching of general principles assuming a vast variety of complexions, but you are to apply general principles which are laid down. The great thing, therefore, for Christian men is to understand the culture of the conscience, the intelligent training of the moral and spiritual faculties, that there should be in the man, by culture through the truth, by the Divine Spirit and the culture of the finer faculties of his nature, a nice perception of the lights and shades of his moral obligations. The New Testament gives us a grand general rule, and it tells us, as those whose reason is enlightened, whose conscience is educated, and who under the influence of that can apply a general rule, what to do.

II. "This is the law and the prophets." It is the law and the prophets in relation to this matter, in relation to social morality, in relation to the second table of the law; but it is not the law and the prophets with respect to both tables of the law. Our Lord did not come merely to be a teacher of social morality; He did not come to confine Himself to that, but to be a Redeemer and a Saviour, and to teach His disciples in the Divine life, that out of that Divine life should come all social virtue which, coming out of the Divine life and being done unto God, is worthy of being called holiness, something very different from mere social virtue.

T. BINNEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 8.

REFERENCES: vii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1,723; *Preacher's Monthly* vol. i., p. 260; J. L. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 136.

**Chap. vii., vers. 13, 14.—"Enter ye in at the strait gate," etc.**

THERE are only two ways—the broad and the narrow. Along one or other of these has every mortal pilgrim gone. By one or other of these is every living man travelling now.

I. Look first at the broad way. It is the most manifest and obtrusive, and the nearest to us naturally. (1) It has a gate. A gate is a place of entrance to a city, or a field, or a country. As a religious term it means the beginning of a course or onward career. It points to the great moral truth, that there are critical and decisive points in life to which men come. (2) The way is broad. All kinds of persons may walk in it. Some are much worse than others; some are on the darker side of the road, some are on the side nearest the narrow way, "not far from the kingdom of God."

II. We come next to the strait gate. There is thus an undisguised difficulty in salvation. The way is narrow, but the gate that gives entrance to it is narrower still. The gate can be none other than repentance, the leaving of one life behind, and entering on another. The turning and the change are the greatest that can possibly be. The *principle* of the life is changed. The affections must follow the principle. The habits must follow the affections. It is a change throughout the whole being.

III. Note these inducements to walk in this narrow way. (1) The gate is strait, but it is always open. Always open and strait as it is, there is not a man living who cannot, if he will, get through. (2) The narrow way is narrow, but it grows wider as you go on; not that Christians ever cease to deny themselves, but that the self-denial becomes easier, more full of recompense, more the normal law of life. (3) The end is everlasting life. Who can tell the meaning hidden in the heart of God that these words contain? It leadeth unto life.

A. RALEIGH, *Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 62.

THE Strait Gate.

Why should this gate be called strait? In order to understand the language of our Lord, let us call to mind the four great laws of the kingdom, and it will not be difficult to understand why this gate should be called strait.

I. Christ enjoins us to love our enemies. If you consider what that means, you cannot but feel that such a gate is a very strait one, and hard indeed to enter in at.

II. Moreover, the Lord also laid down a principle of unosten-

tatious sincerity, which forms a very strait gate to all manner of hypocrites and formalists.

III. Jesus goes on yet further to say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." The carnal, worldly mind finds it a very hard thing—a very strait gate indeed—to set its affection on things above, and trust God for all that may be needed. And yet we cannot enter in at the strait gate, unless we take no thought for the morrow, but seek first the kingdom of God, and trust Him to provide the rest.

IV. And now add to all these difficult requirements the further demand made on us, that we should do to others as we would that they should do to us. Now here again is an extremely strait gate. It implies that we should never judge hastily, but take pains, and be at some trouble to understand our neighbour's case, and to feel what he may be expected to feel, and to follow up our sympathy with active help and kindness. And it is hard for the selfishness of our hearts to take the same interest in another as we do in our own affairs. Yet we cannot really enter in at the strait gate, unless we are prepared to bear each other's burdens in this spirit, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 308.

THERE are two things which Holy Scripture sets before us in every possible way—the exceeding desire of the Almighty to save mankind, and the exceeding unwillingness of mankind to turn to Him and be saved, on account of the extreme corruption of our hearts.

I. It has been well observed, how easy it is for God to create is evident from the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, for He has only to speak the word and all things are made. But how difficult it is, even for almighty power, to redeem will appear from the sufferings of Jesus Christ, from all the history of the world, and from the fact that, after all that has been done, the way of life is narrow. And this was very apparent when our Lord was manifest in the flesh, for He went about with almighty power, exceedingly desirous to restore and to do good to all, to heal every disease and remove every shape of evil, but still He could not do, it is said, what He wished to do, because of man's unbelief. It was easy for our blessed Lord to walk upon the waves of the sea; it was easy for Him to feed thousands with a few loaves; but not so easy was it to get one child of Adam to repent and be forgiven. And therefore, perhaps, it is

that there is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth, so great and difficult a matter is it to get one sinner to be converted that it makes a movement, as it were, and a stir among the blessed societies of heaven.

II. As eternal salvation is of all things the highest object on which our hearts can be set, so it is the most difficult. And a great part of the difficulty consists in this, that we will not be persuaded it is so difficult in our own case, but think that on account of the unbounded mercies of God, we may ever secure our pardon, and can repent whenever we please. And therefore, when worldly things go well with us we are full of self-confidence, we are full of care about everything but our spiritual condition, and when we are afflicted we are too much cast down; whereas in adversity we should learn Christian hope, and in prosperity we should fear always and exceedingly.

III. It is very awful, and enough to make the hardest heart serious, to consider that if there are many who go the way of destruction, and few that find the way of life, then each should reflect that the chances are that he himself will not find it. He is more likely to be of the number of the many than of the few. If each person would seriously consider this, such a thought would make him very earnest about his salvation.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ii., p. 233.

REFERENCES: vii. 13.—A. Jessopp, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 1; T. T. Lynch, *Sermons for My Curates*, p. 353. vii. 13, 14.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. i., p. 164; E. Bersier, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 82; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 255; W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. i.

**Chap. vii., ver. 14.—"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."**

I. THE faithfulness of a holy God is the meaning which lies on the surface of the text. Sin has separated man from God, and the whole world lies in an outer darkness. The way that leads down to destruction is broad and easy. It requires no exertion, no self-denial, no crucifying of sinful desires. But to turn from this broad path into the narrow way of life is difficult. The gate unto life is *strait*. The compassionate Redeemer of men has told us that it is *strait*. He will not make it wider that the carnal may get through. Although a whole world should remain without and perish because it is strait, God will not

make the entrance easier. The terms are clear and fixed. There is no ambiguity, and will be no change.

II. The tenderness of a merciful Father. (1) There is a gate. When a window is opened in heaven to display a terror, the gate is strait, we see within and read the mercy. There is a gate. While the ostensible announcement is, Your corruptions must be excluded, the covert intimation is, Yourself may go in. In form the text is a stroke directed against a sinful man; but in nature it is intended to take effect only on the man's sin, to destroy it, and so permit the emancipated man to enter into the joy of the Lord. (2) The gate leadeth unto life. If the passage is dark, narrow like the grave, the mansion in which it issues is as bright as heaven, and as large as eternity. If the pleasures of sin must be left behind, the pleasures of holiness await you at God's right hand for evermore. (3) Those who enter neither make nor open the gate; they only find it. It is not written, Few there be that can force their way through it; but, "Few there be that find it." Men spend their strength for nought in efforts to escape from condemnation when God has not made a way. All the delay and all the loss occur through the error of trying to make a gate, instead of seeking the gate that is already made. (4) He who made the way, and keeps it open now, is glad when many "go in thereat."

W. ARNOT, *Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life*, p. 237.

I. IN proportion to the importance of any kingdom is the stringency of the conditions of entrance. (1) Here is the kingdom of human learning—knowledge, critical acquaintance with letters, ample and accurate information about history, all that is known by the name of learning—and over the gate of that kingdom I find this inscription, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." (2) Here is a man who wishes to excel in authorship. You read his book. You don't see all that lies behind the book. You don't see the rough outline which he first sketched—blotting and interlining and erasing. What is it that is written over the man's study and over the man's desk? This, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." (3) We are thus enabled to say that the entrance to the kingdom of heaven is necessarily the straitest, narrowest of all. What are other kingdoms to the kingdom of life? As this is the highest kingdom of all, where is the unreasonableness of making the conditions of entrance into this kingdom the most exacting and stringent of all?

II. There are two gates, and only two; two destinies, and only two—the way leading to destruction; the way leading to life. The question now is, Will you have life according to the interpretation of the Son of God, or will you not? He that believeth shall be saved.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 169.

Chap. vii., vers. 15-20.—"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," etc.

I. CHRIST warns us here to beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing. There is allusion here, no doubt, to the symbolical garments of the prophets, with which His hearers would be so far familiar, having in their minds John the Baptist's girdle of camel's hair. It is likely enough that sheep's clothing was even more frequently used by them than camel's hair—being symbolical at once of their shepherd character and also of innocence and guileless simplicity. Now Christ gives us to understand here that others will come, wearing the prophetic robes, which are easily put on, but not being true shepherds of the sheep, being rather like ravening wolves, who care not save to rend and to kill and to destroy. The sheep's clothing here is not a matter of dress only, but of religious profession and moral bearing, for without some plausible semblance of godliness the false prophet would be easily detected and would soon lose his errand. (1) The false prophets come, they are not sent; they come on their own errands, they are not sent on their mission by God. (2) These false prophets make a wide gate and a broad road for us; and that is perhaps the essential idea of their sheep's clothing.

II. Christ gives us a test by which the false prophet may be tried. "By their fruits," He says, "ye shall know them." By this is meant the truth, not in its mere intellectual aspect, but in its practical results. The proof of a man's grace and truth and godliness is to be sought in two ways. (1) It may be seen first and chiefly in himself. He who calls on us to enter in at the strait gate must show some tokens that he has himself entered in. We must not inquire merely what are his views, but what practical illustration does he give of those views in his life; for if there is no indication that he has been grafted into Christ, how shall I hope to gather grapes of thorns, or good fruit from a corrupt tree? (2) The fruit may be seen in others too. The effect of his teaching may be witnessed in those who hear him. The true shepherd goes before his flock, and they

follow him; and if they are all on the narrow road, surely this will be more or less apparent, both in him and in them.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 323.

REFERENCES: vii. 15-21.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 16; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 344. vii. 15-20.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Manifesto of the King*, p. 595.

Chap. vii., vers. 15-29.

I. THE object of our Lord in this Sermon on the Mount was to convey an accurate idea of the righteousness required in His kingdom. He did so mainly by contrasting it with the spurious forms of righteousness current among men. The mere pretender is placed before us under three figures: (1) the wolf in sheep's clothing; (2) a thorn bush that has artificial flowers and fruits stuck all over it; (3) a man who builds a very superb mansion, spends no end of pains and money on what can meet the eye, and exposes himself to public criticism. People pass by and admire. On visiting the spot afterwards, they see nothing but a heap of ruins. The house was fine in appearance at first, but lacked the essential thing—the foundation. The semblance of the thing is by no means the thing itself.

II. We are liable, however opposed to shams in ordinary life, to be shallow in religion. When a man is recognized by society as a Christian, he soon gets to deem himself one. Appearances are all in his favour. The hearing of the Word seems sufficient evidence of a devout mind. We listen so respectfully to instruction in duty that surely more cannot be required from us. Are we not often as much satisfied when we see the reasonableness of a thing, and feel as if we were already become righteous, as when we experience the reality?

III. The results of trusting in superficial appearances are stated in language intended to set forth their overwhelmingly disastrous nature. The rain-storm mentioned is such as every winter is sure to bring about in Palestine. It is no extraordinary calamity. The inevitable tests the house, and shows its faultiness or its strength. Time is all that is required to test everything. It forces nature to the front. Make sure that you have such a foundation as will stand all the shocks of time and last eternally.

M. DODS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 397.

REFERENCES: vii. 15-29.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 265.

**Chap. vii., ver. 16.—"Ye shall know them by their fruits."**

THE religion of Jesus Christ is one of deeds, not words; a life of action, not of dreaming. Our Lord warns us to beware of any form of religion, in ourselves or others, which does not bring forth good fruit. God does not look for the leaves of profession or the blossoms of promise. He looks for fruit unto holiness. If we are selfish, self-willed, proud, lovers of our own selves, our religion is but the sheep's clothing covering the wolfish heart, or the white paint hiding the corruption of the sepulchre. It is easy enough to assume the character and manner of a Christian, but to live the Christian life is not so easy. What are some of the fruits which God looks for in the life of a Christian?

I. At the head of all we must place love. If you really try to do God's will it is a proof of your love. A true Christian cannot be selfish. If we love God we shall try to lead others to Him.

II. Another fruit for which God looks in a Christian's life is humility. Every act and word of our Saviour's earthly life teaches us to be humble. Let the haughty, the proud, the self-satisfied man open his Gospel, and he will find a reproof to his pride on every page. We preach humility to others, we expect to see it in others' lives; are we humble ourselves? Have we learnt to walk humbly with our God?

III. Another fruit which God expects in the lives of His people is forgetfulness of self. Let us strive by God's grace to get away from self and the eternal thinking and talking of our own concerns. Even Jesus Christ pleased not Himself, and we are no Christians unless we are trying to forget ourselves and to deny ourselves.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 69.

REFERENCES: vii. 16.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 97; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 276; E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 175. vii. 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 16. vii. 18.—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 99. vii. 20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 33; *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 253.

**Chap. vii., vers. 21-29.**

THE Wise and Foolish Builders.

I. The Lord describes the false disciples as men who cry, "Lord, Lord," to Him, but who bear no fruit. The language clearly implies that there are some who profess to be Christians, who acknowledge Jesus to be the Lord, and pray to Him as

Lord, and praise Him as the Lord, who nevertheless have no part in Him. This confession, "Lord, Lord," is symbolic of a sound creed, as well as a religious profession. It is as much as to say that there are many who have an unhesitating belief in the doctrine of grace and of God, who, nevertheless, are not true disciples of Jesus. Our Lord gives us to understand that the true disciple is one who not only cries, "Lord, Lord," but also doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven.

II. Having thus described the false and true disciples, the Lord goes on to remind us that there is a day coming when their characters shall be discovered and their judgment settled.

III. The Lord concludes the whole sermon with one of those exquisite parables whose pictorial beauty and spiritual insight, always remarkable, are in this case elevated into a strain of solemn grandeur and awful impressiveness. Of course that parable rises most naturally from the immediately preceding warning in reference to the day of judgment. But equally, of course, it stands in close relation also to the whole discourse which it so fitly concludes. You may say the foolish builder is the man who heareth the words of the Lord and doeth them not, and who persuades himself that all is well because he crieth, "Lord, Lord," or because he prophesieth and doeth many wonderful works in the name of Christ, whom, nevertheless, Christ will one day utterly disown, so that his house shall fall about him in a great and sorrowful ruin. Or, on the other hand, you may gather up the whole teaching of the sermon—its introductory beatitudes, its profound laws of love, truth, faith, and sympathy—and say that the foolish builder is the man who has not entered in at the strait gate, thus clearly described and asserted to be the only way of life, the only sure foundation on which our hopes can rest.

W. C. SMITH, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 338.

REFERENCES: vii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,158; R. W. Dale, *The Evangelical Revival*, p. 104; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 203. vii. 21-23.—J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 615; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 15. vii. 22, 23.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,317. vii. 23-27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 248.

### Chap. vii., vers. 24, 25.

BUILDING upon the Rock.

I. True religion is here likened to a man's own house. For, after all, every one's real life is his home. We move, indeed, amidst many an outdoor scene, and we meet there with all the

varieties which give to our world its chequered lights and shadows. But, in comparison, these external things are very little to a man who can retire into the bosom of his family, and command for himself the repose, and the refreshment, and the welcome, and the smiles, and the affections of that sanctuary of the heart. So it is with religion. We go out to other things, we come home to that.

II. Now, of this home of the mind, the Great Teacher tells us that it must be "built upon a rock." And a home, whatever it may be besides, is a poor home if it be foundationless. A few err in looking at foundations too much; many more commit the far more dangerous and vital mistake of not searching into them enough; they are busy, these men, in filling their houses with pretty fancies, and putting on many ornaments, and rearing pinnacles of sparkling hope—while the whole, from end to end, is hollow, and the entire fabric, at any moment, totters to its fall. And so it happens to them, in some awful hour when they most need the refuge, lo, the building, the baseless building, is gone, and they are left, shelterless and naked, to the fury of the storm.

III. How are we to get upon the Rock? I answer, By dealing with God's Word, whenever it meets you, as a reality. Handle the Word of God as a fact. Follow it implicitly where it leads you. God's promises are all to effort. Obedience is faith. Therefore for every hearing let there be a doing. Let every received truth have a reflection in behaviour. For he that "heareth and doeth" is the wise man who builds his house upon a rock, and it stands for ever and ever.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 259.

Chap. vii., vers. 24, 26.

DOING and Dreaming; Houses on the Rock and the Sand.

I. In the course of my travels I have met with three distinct dreamers. (1) There is the rationalistic dreamer. He beholds his face in a glass, and stands before it, admiring it. His religion is just a looking-glass for himself; but as the looking-glass is made by himself, it is worth little. To him religion is a system of ideas, and no idea represents reality. (2) There is the sentimental dreamer. He will talk to you for hours of the presence of God in nature. But religion is not that; it is more than that. Sentiment is eminently "a face in a glass," and just reflects what we are ourselves. A house of sentiment is the last place I should fly to, to shelter me from the storm.

(3) There is the pietistic dreamer. Contemplation without action is disease. Idle self-contemplation is the paralysis of the soul.

II. The religion of the dreamer is a religion of theory. The religion of the doer is one of experience. It has been too much the method in religion to put knowing beyond doing. Knowing has been regarded as the highest faculty; in reality, it is the lowest. Knowing should result in doing, which is the intellect resolved into the will; and doing should merge into being, which is the intellect and will in unconscious unity—man's highest state. Short of this, religion is a mere reverie.

III. The religion of the dreamer will always be one of doubt. The religion of the doer will always be a religion of evidence. This follows the last remark, because doing leads to knowing.

IV. The dreamer confines his religion to solitude; the doer finds a vent for his in society. Religion comforts solitude and consoles it; it does not encourage the spirit of it. If we are to enter the solitude, it is that we may collect the moral forces of our nature, and come forth, inspired by the Divine Spirit, to cry aloud, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!"

V. The religion of the dreamer is a religion without love. But the life of the doer is love. Our love, in fact, is proportioned to our labours—our labour proportions our love. Love is the fountain of all true knowledge. Every man understands more by his affections than by his reason.

VI. There is no salvation for the dreamer. Ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom; and five were wise, *and five foolish.* Work while it is to-day. Shadows fall, life is closing round you. All things settle into seriousness. Opportunities are flying. Work alone is imperishable.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 413.

REFERENCES: vii. 24-27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 918; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 55; A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 90; J. Oswald Dykes, *The Manifesto of the King*, p. 637; E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 76. vii. 24-29.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 273.

**Chap. vii., ver. 28.—"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine."**

1. NOTE some characteristics which the Sermon on the Mount possesses. (1) The wonderful literary beauty of the language cannot have been unobserved by any one. (2) We have all marked the desultory arrangement, and the apparently disconnected progress of ideas. (3) From beginning to end there is

no allusion in it to the atonement made by our Redeemer. Christ is here as the preaching prophet, not in any disclosure as the atoning priest. (4) The history of the sermon affords a conspicuous example of the way in which men sometimes pervert God's Word. For those sceptical moralists who reject the notion of sin—of the awful curse denounced on sin and due to it, of the need and provision of a ransom for sin—calmly and superciliously appeal away from all warning by saying, "Our sufficient creed is the Sermon on the Mount." Most of us would admit this statement, for we remember a startling and supernatural reach of requirement in this discourse: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

II. What was the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount? (1) We find in it the description of a character. The Sermon on the Mount pictures a character perfectly easy to recognize anywhere, if we could meet it. (2) We find in this discourse a rule of life. It is a thing to be acted and breathed, as well as read and quoted. Jesus of Nazareth lived this wonderful discourse. He put it forth to be lived by everybody under the New Testament dispensation. (3) We find here, likewise, a standard of spiritual and experimental attainment. (4) We find in this sermon an instrument of condemnation. It is astonishing that any man can take comfort in turning away from the Gospel scheme of atonement, and resting on this sermon for peace; for there are verses in it crowded and awful with monitions of coming wrath. (5) We find in this discourse an incitement to holiness.

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 248.

REFERENCES: vii. 28.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 288. vii. 28, 29.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 284.

**Chap. vii., ver. 29.—"He taught them as One having authority, and not as the scribes."**

THIS was the impression made by our Lord on those who heard Him teach and preach. He spoke as if He had a right to be heard, as if He had a message to deliver, as if His declaration of the truth were enough.

I. Just what distinguishes our Lord's teaching from the teaching of uninspired teachers distinguishes the Bible from all other books. It speaks with authority. Other books may teach the truth; other books may give precepts of holiness, may give examples of excellence; other books may set before

us the loftiest, the purest ideas—may demonstrate the truth of their teaching by unanswerable arguments. But the characteristic of the Bible is not merely the truth which it teaches, the examples which it holds before the eyes, the ideals of life which it compels us to revere; but, beyond all these, the love of supreme authority with which it speaks. It is not merely that the Bible claims this authority; it compels the conscience to allow the claim. It speaks with authority, and it speaks with power.

II. Whence came this authority and this power? What do we mean by our conscious, and still more by our unconscious, acknowledgment of it? We mean that it is overshadowed by the presence of God. Just as the religious man is distinguished from the man of high moral character, and from the man of excellent natural graces, by the ever-present sense of a relation to God running through all his life, just so the Bible is unlike all other books, because it always seems to take us at once into God's presence. Not by any means that it professes to be, or seems as if it were, dictated by God Himself. No, plainly enough, it is written in human language: the thoughts are human thoughts; it is stirred by human feelings; it is addressed to human understandings. It is as thoroughly human as our Lord was man. But there is brooding over it, there is dwelling in it, a Divine authority which makes it quite unlike anything else which the world has seen. It lays hold of the conscience as nothing else has ever done, nothing else can do. It speaks with an authority which other teachers cannot claim.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 33.

REFERENCES: vii. 29.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 132; **T. T. Lynch**, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 217.

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**Chap. viii., vers. 1-4.**

**JESUS and Imperfect Faith.**

I. Notice the leper's appeal to Christ. This appeal, as every other, must have had some manner of faith to rest upon. The leper believed in a healing virtue nigh at hand. When you think of this and all it involves, you will discover this faith to be by no means ordinary. He had been sadly conscious of his leprosy; he could find neither relief from the physician nor consolation from the theologian, and was therefore fastened within his leprous self by the hand of a hard and unrelenting

fate. For him, then, to believe in any healing possible to him was to exercise the faith that overcometh the world, and the world which he had to overcome was a hard unsympathetic world. In the presence of the Christ this possibility flashed on and through his spirit. He believed, and therefore spoke.

II. Christ's answer to this appeal. When the leper said, "If thou wilt," he narrowed his appeal and directed it to the will of Jesus. His faith in Christ's power was very much stronger than his faith in His goodness. It contained much that was true, but did not contain much more that was equally true. Christ answered not according to the imperfection of the appeal, but according to its possibility of being perfected. And He touched him. He might have healed him, perhaps, without that touch; but He touched him. When, we may wonder, had that man been touched before? The leper could not forget the touch of that hand. Neither can you and I forget that the Christ has touched us, and touched us in all our possibilities. There is nothing peaceful within us which He has not touched and made still by the touch; neither is there anything painful without the impress of His hand. The deepest of our wounds has been probed by Him, and He confidently assures us of being finally healed.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 21.

REFERENCES: viii. 1-4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 54; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 2. viii. 1-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 344. viii. 1-13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 21. viii. 2.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 182. viii. 2, 3.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. i., p. 47.

Chap. viii., ver. 3.—"**And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.**"

NOTICE in Christ's touch of the sick—

I. His fixing and confirming faith in Himself, the Healer. It is in condescension to human weakness that He lays His hands on diseased folk; we believe in little that we cannot see. Pain and sickness are so sensible that we look for equally sensible tokens of the energy of the restorer. Christ came into the world to heal sicknesses; and faith in Him, as Healer, was essential to the cure. By His touch He fixed men's thoughts upon Himself; this was the pledge of healing by which He stimulated and confirmed their faith.

II. His answer to our craving for sympathy. Christ's ability to cure would have been the same, though He had never

touched a sick person of them all; but the weary multitudes would not have sought to be taken to Him. A very little thing was this touch, even as an indication of kindly purpose; but it was just the little thing that a sensitive sick man needed.

III. The symbol of His bearing our infirmities and carrying our sins. He "touched" our nature in all its pollution. He shrank not from it, but took it upon Himself, and bore its shame and suffering. A thousand will subscribe to a hospital, for one who will live with the idiot or deformed; a thousand will pay the doctor and the nurse, for one who will enter the cottage of the squalid sick and spend one night there. It needs much schooling of self to suppress the instinct of revolt at sickness hideously before us. Turn now and read of Christ, that He *touched* the sick and healed them. You will see that in His dealing with bodily diseases He did but symbolize how entirely He had taken human sinfulness to Himself.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: viii. 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 18; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 75; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 463. viii. 5.—J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, p. 17. viii. 5-12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 54. viii. 5-13.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 12; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 211; *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 25. viii. 5-14.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 116. viii. 7.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 147; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 18. viii. 7, 13.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,422.

### Chap. viii., ver. 8.—"Speak the word only."

SEVERAL features of the character of this centurion are worthy of all imitation.

Notice: I. His singular care for his slave. We know something of the hardening effects of slavery in the United States of America. But, as the greatest of Roman historians (Mommsen) tells us, African slavery is a mere drop in the ocean in comparison with the horrors of slavery in the old Roman empire. Even so tender-hearted and amiable a man as Cicero once blushed and offered an abject apology because he so far forgot himself as to feel a twinge of regret at the painful death of a slave. It was in this corrupt and horrible atmosphere that this man cared for his slave; and I know nothing that is more noble, more indicative of the Godlike man, than a proper courtesy and thoughtfulness and a disinterested and unselfish care for those who are our social inferiors.

II. This man, who cared in so divine a way for the health

even of his slave, had a regard for religion; and these two things generally go together.

III. Mark the centurion's beautiful humility. He felt that he was unworthy that one so good and great as Christ should come under his roof; and so, as Augustine well said, in his characteristic way, accounting himself unworthy that Christ should enter into his doors, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter into his heart.

IV. This Roman soldier teaches us the great practical crowning lesson of being satisfied with the word of Christ. We need nothing but the word of Christ; for the word of Christ is not like the word of an impotent man, that falls helpless to the ground. It is mighty; the omnipotence of God is in it. The only lifeboat in this wide sea is the word of Christ. The only safe anchorage is the word of Christ. The only enduring thing is the word of Christ.

H. PRICE HUGHES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 113.

REFERENCES: viii. 8.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 158; J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 82. viii. 8, 9.—*Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 161. viii. 9-13.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 182.

Chap. viii., ver. 10.—"When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

I. OBSERVE how this man got his faith, how it came to him. It came not in the midst of spiritual privilege, but in the midst of common life. Nay, more than this, it came from that particular field of common life which was his own. It came from his professional life as a soldier. To see the poetic side of discipline is not given to all; but to see the spiritual side is given to still fewer. And it was just this spiritual element which had been revealed to the Roman centurion. In the discharge of his daily professional duty, in the reception and transmission of the brief word of command, he could see the emblem of Divine power—power instantaneous, wholly effective, incapable of being thwarted or baffled, when once executed absolutely irreversible. And so, now, when a servant who was dear to him seemed at the point of death, he brought, as it were, his disciplined spiritual instincts into battle array. He had heard enough of Jesus to assure him of His love and power. His faith, trained as we have tried to imagine, would do the rest.

II. Note the fact that Jesus marvelled. Why did He

marvel? You answer, Because the man was a Gentile. By comparison little had been given to him. He had had, as we should say, but few spiritual advantages. He had not from his youth known the true God. He had not from a child known the Holy Scriptures, or been brought up in instincts of worship, with saints and prophets and friends of God standing out in the sacred background of the distant past. And yet he was found meet for the kingdom of God. His faith was wonderful, a marvel even to Him who had given it.

III. What, after all, was the essence of the centurion's faith? It was faith, we must remember, in an early and elementary stage. We must not expect to find the faith of a Paul or an Augustine—the faith that removes mountains, the faith that overcomes the pollutions of the world. It was a belief in Christ's unlimited power to heal. "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

H. M. BUTLER, *Cambridge Review*, January 27th, 1886.

Chap. viii., ver. 10, with Mark vi., ver. 6.

Two Marvels—Faith and Unbelief.

I. Look first at some of the things which may lead us to marvel both at faith and at unbelief. (1) Our own nature. (2) The Bible. (3) The course of life and its events.

II. Notice some principles by which we may be helped to a decision. (1) The first thing to be realized is that God's plan of impressing spiritual truths is not by demonstration. (2) To reach a decision in faith, we should look at things in their full breadth and in their practical bearing. (3) To have faith raised to certainty we must find it in the life.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 83.

REFERENCES: viii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 936; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 262; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 47; F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 114; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 451; C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 1st series, p. 103.

Chap. viii., ver. 11.—"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

FAITH the title for justification. Hearing and believing—that is, knowing, confessing, and asking—give us under the covenant of grace a title; nay, are the sole necessary right and title to receive the gifts purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. And now observe what this does not imply.

I. It does not imply anything about the time or mode of our justification. Faith in the general scheme of the Gospel is what their very birth and origin is in the particular case of the children of Christians. It constitutes a claim in our case that we should be made Christians; it is an evidence, an inward spiritual token from God, that He means us to be made Christians; it is a promise from Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, that He means us, that He wills us, to be Christians. Him whom God gifts with faith will He also in due time gift with evangelical, justifying grace; but the first gift does not give the second gift, it does not involve it, it does not prepare for it; it does but constitute a title to it. A title is one thing, possession is another.

II. This becomes still more clear on considering that, whereas *faith* is in some passages made the means of gaining acceptance, *prayer* is in other places spoken of as the means; and, moreover, prayer is evidently the expression of faith, so that whatever is true of prayer is true of faith also. Now it is too plain to insist upon, that though success is certainly promised to prayer in the event, yet the time of succeeding is *not* promised; and, so far from its being immediate, we are expressly told to pray again and again, to continue instant in prayer, in order to succeed.

III. This is made a matter of certainty by the instances we find in the New Testament of justification by faith. We find that faith was not thought enough, but was made to lead on to other conditions. He who has the means of hearing the Gospel, and believes in it heartily, has not a means of gaining, but a title to receive, justification; he has within him a warrant, not that God has justified him, but that He will justify him.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 153.

Chap. viii., vers. 11, 12.—"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I. THERE ought to have been nothing which startled the Jews in the first part of this announcement. The name of Abraham ought to have recalled to them the covenant on which their nation stood. That covenant would have told them of a blessing to all the earth. But they had never understood what the blessing was which they had inherited, and which the families of the earth were to share with them. The Gospel of

Christ's kingdom was a sentence upon those who had imagined another kingdom for themselves. The news of salvation to the world was the judgment upon those who counted the salvation of the world a loss and curse to them.

II. The light of the world shines forth upon mankind. Those who should hail it and spread it through the world are scared by it—fly from it, hate it. Either they must establish their reign of darkness, or the light must prove itself stronger than they are. It does prove stronger; therefore they are left to the darkness which they have chosen. It is outer darkness; it lies outside of God's kingdom, outside of humanity. God's order has banished it. The Word made flesh and dwelling among men opened to men a kingdom of righteousness, peace, joy; showed them how with their spirits they might enter into it; promised them the Spirit of His Father—the Spirit who had dwelt without measure in Him—that they might enter into it. The Word came to His own, and His own received Him not. They did not confess Him as the Lord of their spirits; they saw in Him only the carpenter's son. And so more and more the invisible world became utterly obscure to them; they could perceive only that which their senses presented to them. And so more and more those great possessions of which the senses can take no account—justice, love, truth—the eternal, substantial, universal treasures, which the hearts of holy men felt that they must have or perish, were withdrawn from the apprehension of the chosen people; they became as though they were not. Shadows took their place; they passed into shadows. Then came the hubbub of parties, a Babel of unintelligible sounds, nothing clear but the passion and fury which were trying to express themselves, and which, since words proved so ineffectual, must seek for other weapons.

**F. D. Maurice**, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 69.

References: viii. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., Nos. 39, 40. viii. 13.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,422; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 123; C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 1st series, p. 119; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 97; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 33. viii. 14, 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,836; G. Macdonald, *The Miracles of our Lord*, p. 25. viii. 14-17.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 21. viii. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 49. viii. 16, 17.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 48; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 417. viii. 17.—J. Thain Davidson, *Catholic Sermons*, p. 49. viii. 18-22.—J. O. Davies, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 55; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 30. viii. 19-22.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 123.

Chap. viii., ver. 22.—"But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead."

It was the answer of our Lord to one of His disciples, possibly as an old tradition tells us, to the Apostle Philip, who, before following Him, wished to go and bury his father. The extreme urgency of the command is plain, nor is its meaning mistakable: "Thou art living in a world of natural and of spiritual death; thou art called to a kingdom of life. Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. Follow thou Me."

I. And whither then must we follow Christ? In spirit, if not in letter. We must follow Him along the road He trod on earth; and that was a road of self-abnegation, of poverty, of homelessness, of the base man's hatred and the proud man's scorn. Let us not disguise it; it is no primrose path of dalliance, but a hard road—hard and yet happy; and all the highest and the noblest of earth have trodden it—all who have regarded the things eternal, not as things future, but merely as the unseen realities about them now. If we would follow Christ, we must shake off the baser objects of earthly desire as nothing better than the dust which gathers upon the cerements of mortality. So Christ taught us, and so He lived.

II. First then in self-denial; and secondly, you must follow Christ on the road of toil. It is not possible to misread lessons so clear and so heart-searching as those of the two sons and the labourers in the vineyard, and the unprofitable servant, and the stern apologue of the barren trees. It was the first law of Eden, "Work;" and though the work was changed to toil by a penal decree, even that toil by faithful obedience has been transformed into an honour and a blessing. It is, as St. Chrysostom calls it, "a bitter arrow from the gentle hand of God." But then the work must be approached in a right spirit, must be work in God's vineyard and work for God.

III. He who would follow Christ must not only follow Him on the path of self-denial and labour, but must also follow Him in the strength of *enthusiasm*, must be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And herein, too, he must let the dead bury their dead. For the dead of this world hate this fiery spirit. "Above all, no zeal," said the witty, crafty, successful statesman. "Fervent in spirit," said St. Paul; or, as it should be rather rendered, "Boiling in spirit." It was not the word of a fastidious atheist or long-robed Pharisee; but rather one of those words that were thunders—one of the words that have hands and feet. And never was it more needed than now, for

never more than now did the world hate enthusiasm, and never was it more certain that by a noble enthusiasm it can alone be saved.

F. W. Farrar, *The Fall of Man*, p. 55.

I. "Lord, suffer me *first*." That is the cry of nature. "*First* suffer me to be disappointed, and then I will follow Thee; first build my house upon the sand, and then I will come, O Rock, to *Thee*. First worship and waste my affections on the clay, and then I will come to Thee. Suffer me *first*." But Jesus answered, "Follow *thou* Me." (1) *Follow Me*. I am Life, and you seek life; but then you have only death; as long as you linger there, you do but seek the living among the dead. Let your eyes follow Me from the place of graves. (2) Follow Me. You seek love, and here nothing loves you; that which loved you has gone, and if you would regain what loved you you must follow Me. (3) Follow Me; I am the only Life; I am the only Master of the kingdom of life; I am the Way to the life.

II. Thus the great lesson our Lord intended to preach was even this: Life is not a complaint, but an action; it is not to be spent in grieving, but in doing. Life is in action, in following more than in musing. The music of the harp is beautiful, but that has not served the world so well as the music of the hammer. The past should not be a tombstone, but a garden—a place in which we bury, so that the buried may bloom.

III. It is only in our own hearts that we can find the verdict as to the sentiments with which we should regard the dead. I believe the highest love is furthest removed from the storm of passionate grief, because love is a prophecy; so I would say, Love your friends more, and you will grieve less. These words were an invocation from a living to a dead dispensation—from dead ceremonies and observances. "I am the Life." To these also might Christ have said, as He said under other circumstances, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way."

E. Paxton Hood, *Sermons*, p. 284.

References: viii. 22.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 145; *Ibid.*, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 10th series, p. 407.

### Chap viii., vers. 23-27.

The Stilling of the Tempest.

I. "Behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea." A sudden and violent squall, such as these small inland seas,

surrounded with mountain gorges, are notoriously exposed to, descended on the bosom of the lake; and the ship which bore the Saviour of the world appeared to be in imminent peril. But though the danger was so real, and was ever growing more urgent, "until the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full," their Master, weary and worn out with the toils of the day, continued sleeping still. The disciples may have hesitated long before they ventured to arouse Him; yet, at last, the extremity of the peril overcame their hesitation, and they did so, not without exclamations of haste and terror, as is evidenced by the double "Master, Master," of St. Luke.

II. "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea." Cæsar's confidence that the barque which contained him and his fortunes could not sink forms an earthly counterpart to the heavenly calmness and confidence of the Lord. In the hour of her wildest uproar Nature knew the voice of Him who was her rightful Lord, and gladly returned to her allegiance to Him, and in this to her place of proper service to that race of which He had become the Head, and whose lost prerogatives He was reclaiming and reasserting once more. The chief ethical purpose of our Lord was to lead His disciples into thoughts ever higher and more awful of that Lord whom they served, more and more to teach them that in nearness to Him was safety and deliverance from every danger. The danger which exercised should likewise strengthen their faith, and they indeed had need of a mighty faith, since God, in St. Chrysostom's words, had chosen them to be the athletes of the world.

III. The sea is evermore in Scripture the symbol of the restless and sinful world. As Noah and his family, the kernel of the whole humanity, were once contained in the ark tossed on the waters of the deluge, so the kernel of the new humanity, of the new creation, Christ and His apostles, in this little ship. And the Church of Christ has evermore resembled this tempested barque, the waves of the world raging horribly around it, yet never prevailing to overwhelm it, and this because Christ is in it.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Miracles*, p. 152.

REFERENCES: viii. 23.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 392. viii. 23-27.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 39; S. Cox, *An Expositor's Note-book*, p. 314. viii. 23-34.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 25; W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 207. viii. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 91. viii. 25.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 272.

Chap. viii., ver. 26.—"Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

THE paragraph before us has two parts. At first sight they are not distinct only—they are incongruous. When you study them you see the harmony. Both represent Christ as the Restorer and Tranquillizer. The scenery of the two manifestations is widely different. The one is a storm at sea, the other a storm in the soul. But Christ manifests Himself in each of them; in each, when He manifests Himself, there is a great calm.

I. Christ, for proof's sake, for evidence' sake, brought on this occasion order out of confusion and calm out of storm, proving Himself the Lord of nature here in her disorders, as elsewhere in her diseases. Thus He showed himself the Master of our life as we live it—a life of conflict and buffeting; as with stubborn elements, so with adverse circumstances, and so with warring passions. He who is omnipotent over these actualities is omnipotent over all. Christ came not to make the outward world calm, whether the world of elements or the world of circumstances. But He came, first, to show Himself by many infallible proofs supreme even over these; and He came, secondly, to introduce an inward peace at once into all these confusions. He saves, not by taking us out of difficulty, but by making us in our weakness strangely strong; not by smoothing the circumstances, but by fortifying the soul—infusing grace at the moment, and pointing to an indestructible peace beyond.

II. Thus the second half of the narrative falls into entire unity with the first. Christ in the miracles of dispossession manifests Himself as supreme over spiritual disorder. That very incident, with which the insolence of infidelity can make merry, of the destruction of the swine, is intended to set in the strongest light the completeness of the dispossession—intended to say this to us: Evil is no part of you; if it were, your case would be past hope. Evil is an alien, an invader, a usurper of humanity. As yet it may be severed, separated, divorced from us, by the power of Christ and the Spirit, so that it shall be there and we here—it "gone to its own place," in swine, sea, or abyss; and we sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in our right mind.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words of Hope*, p. 101.

Chap. viii., ver. 26.—"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

I. THE storm-beaten boat on the lake is a type of our lives. For every one of us there are times when there ariseth a great

tempest. The storm of sorrow sweeps over our home. We open the letter which tells us of commercial ruin; or we see some one very dear to us snatched away by death; or we ourselves are laid upon a sick-bed. Then, in that time of tempest, when the waves seem to go even over our soul, we must not be fearful. Let us, as Christians, remember that the ship in which we must cross the waves of this troublesome world is the ship of the Church, and that it carries Jesus. Take, then, as our first lesson from the text, that we must not be fearful in time of danger.

II. We must not be fearful in the storm of every-day life. We need courage for every day we live, with its countless trials, temptations, and worries. There needs, for example, "the common courage to be honest, the courage to resist temptation, the courage to speak the truth, the courage to be what we really are, and not to pretend to be what we are not, the courage to live honestly within our own means, and not dishonestly upon the means of others." If only we can feel that we have perfect faith in Jesus being with us, and that we are humbly trying to do our duty, we need fear no evil.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 83.

I. CONSTRAINED by Christ to embark, the Christian man, the Christian family, the Christian nation, tempts the wide waste of this world's waters. With them and among them is He Himself, dwelling in the heart by faith—in the midst of every two or three who are assembled in His name—found of them that seek Him. And for a while, and as long as danger is only in prospect, we feel and rest on this. "God is our hope and strength," we say; "therefore we will not fear." But this our every-day trust will not do for all times. In each man's life there are storms. The waves beat into his ship and threaten to sink it. The very present help of his God seems to have forsaken him. Well for him if even in this infirmity he flies to the apostles' remedy, and calls upon Him who slumbers not indeed, but yet will be sought by prayer with, "Save us, Lord; we perish."

II. With the Christian family the case is similar. The voyage is not without danger and loss. In some unlooked-for shape, from some unexpected quarter, does the storm descend and the waves beat in, and the vessel seems ready to sink. Let such fly to Him in prayer, who has never forgotten them. He can make a peace, even in mourning, which passeth all understanding

III. And the Christian nation goes on its course likewise, a vessel bound across the waste of waters, in obedience to Him who Himself is among and with the people that fear Him. There are fearful storms which befall nations, as well as families and individuals. In such cases there is but one course which the Christian citizen should take, and that course is prayer—prayer, earnest, importunate, unceasing. Your confidence has given way, your strength is small; but you have this one refuge left. Our God has not forgotten us—our Saviour slumbers not; but He loves to be called on by His faithful people, and designates Himself as One that heareth prayer. We do not value prayer enough as an element in our national prosperity. God hears and answers every desire of every earnest heart which is addressed to Him in His Son's name.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v., p. 1.

REFERENCES: viii. 26.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 83; B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 466. viii. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,686; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 411.

**Chap. viii., ver. 28.—"And when He was come to the other side . . . there met Him two possessed with devils," etc.**

JESUS and the Possessed.

I. Jesus was met with two possessed with devils. There is an evil and a good which we know to be not of ourselves. There is a devil and there is an angel to every man's life, a tempter and a saviour, and he is now as he has yielded to the one or welcomed the other. Man must be passive before he can become positive, must take before he can give, and must have his becoming before he can have his being either for good or for bad. He is tempted before he sins, and is saved before he becomes virtuous. To be possessed of an unclean spirit is, in a very true sense, not to think aright. Evil spirits are not the idiosyncrasies of any one age, but have been common to all, not excepting our own. But evil is never seen save in the presence of the good, as darkness is not known except by its contrast with the light.

II. The two men were coming out of the tombs. These words suggest about as melancholy a picture as could be conceived. To be wrong in thought and feeling must at length lead to sorrow, and the sorrow may not be the transitory sorrow of the birth into the nobler life. The tombs were the homes of corruption, and the men lived among the tombs. The

evil within man will ever seek that which is evil without him —evil companions, evil excitements, and evil ways.

III. They were exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. They seem to have been possessed of extraordinary physical powers. To have some powers developed at the expense of the others ought never to be a thing to be longed for. Let an evil thought usurp the mind and exercise its power there for long, and the moral nature will be dwarfed, the intellectual will be robbed of its strength and of its graces, and the man will become the victim of the ungovernable force which he has fostered, and the slave of the debasing passions over which he once thought himself the master. Nature in him will be divided against itself, and Satan will cast out Satan. And this will be a sufficient reason for driving him to the tombs. These were not strong men, but monsters; their energy was wild and unreasonable.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 71.

REFERENCES: viii. 28, 29.—E. J. Hardy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 283; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 157.

Chap. viii., vers. 28-34.

I. CONSIDER the casting out of the devils. (1) The Gospel narratives are distinctly pledged to the historic truth of these occurrences. Either they are true or the Gospels are false. (2) Nor can it be said that they represent the opinion of the time, and use words in accordance with it. This might have been difficult to answer, but that they not only give such expressions as "possessed with devils," and other like ones, but relate to us words spoken by the Lord Jesus, in which the personality and presence of the demons is distinctly implied. (*See* Luke xi. 17-26.) (3) The question then arises—Granted the plain historical truth of possession, what was it? The demoniac was one whose being was strangely interpenetrated by one or more of those fallen spirits who are constantly asserted in the Scriptures to be the enemies and tempters of the souls of men. There appears to have been in him a double will and double consciousness—sometimes the cruel spirit thinking and speaking in him, sometimes his poor crushed self crying out to the Saviour of men for mercy; a terrible advantage taken, and a personal realization, by the malignant powers of evil, of the fierce struggle between sense and conscience in the man of morally divided life.

II. The entrance of the devils into the swine. (1) Of the

reason of this permission we surely are not competent judges Of this, however, we are sure—that if this granting of the request of the evil spirits helped in any way the cure of the men, caused them to resign their hold on them more easily, mitigated the paroxysm of their going forth, this would have been motive enough. (2) The fact itself raises a question in our minds which, though we cannot wholly answer, we may yet approximate to the solution of. How can we imagine the bestial nature capable of the reception of demoniac influence? If the unchecked indulgence of sensual appetite afforded an inlet for the powers of evil to possess the human demoniac, then we have their influence joined to that part of man's nature which he has in common with the brutes that perish, the *animal and sensual soul.* We may thus conceive that the same animal and sensual soul in the brute may be receptive of similar demoniacal influence.

H. ALFORD, *Family Treasury*, 1878, p. 180

REFERENCES: viii. 28-34.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 49. viii. 29.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 611; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 65. viii. 34.—G. Calthrop, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 239; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 160; W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 225. viii. 36, 37.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 2.

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### Chap. ix., vers. 1-8.

**JESUS AND MAN'S DEEPEST SADNESS.**

I. "Jesus saw their faith." Jesus did not see their faith because there was in them no other commendable quality for Him to see; there was their common attachment to their unfortunate friend. But without their faith their affection for their friend could not have linked him in his suffering and miseries with the Christ in His healing and His peace. It was because they believed in Him that they carried the man to Him. And Jesus saw their faith in Him, and because of their faith He had the opportunity afforded Him of seeing their love of the man.

II. He saw something in the man that was a greater evil than the palsy. The friends thought that his being palsied was a sufficient reason why they should carry the man. But Christ forthwith, when He had seen their faith, thought of the man's sin. He had been called Jesus, for He was to save His people from their sins This salvation was His ulterior aim in all He

said or did. The external was touched for the purpose of awakening and quickening the internal of man. The body was healed in order that the spirit might arise and go to its Father. This man's affliction seems to have been connected with his sin. Sin and pain have been the sad associates of man's mortal life. The man was in misery because of his sin, not because of his palsy. He needed cheer of spirit; his heart was broken, and Jesus saw and dealt with that. Having the greater, he could rest without the lesser. Not health, but forgiveness, was to be the basis of his joy.

III. It was when He addressed Himself to the greater thing He saw that Jesus crossed the prejudice of certain of the scribes. Christ suffered at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees because of His morals. It was godliness, according to Christ, that constituted His great offence. It is when Christ touches the conscience, and talks of purity of heart, and says something of hypocrisy that the great quarrel begins. There is no cross for any one who can teach that the kingdom of heaven cometh with observation; and as long as he can say, "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" he is safe enough; but He is not who refuses to give a sign from heaven, and who says, "The kingdom of heaven is within you."

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 87.

REFERENCE: ix. 1-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 466.

Chap. ix., ver. 2.—"And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

I. SIN—its relation to the body. Sin, we know, is a "spiritual wickedness;" its sphere of action, accordingly, is in high places. Mere matter, whether it lie in an amorphous clod in the valley, or move as an organized living body, cannot sin. In those high places where a finite but immortal spirit comes in contact with the Spirit infinite and eternal lies the only element that is capable of sustaining either spiritual purity or spiritual wickedness; yet though sin draws its life-breath in those heavenly places, its members press the earth, and leave their marks indented deep over all the surface. Though sin lives secretly in the soul, it works terribly in the body. In the man sick with the palsy disease was the forerunner and symptom of the body's death. So far the man and his friends plainly saw, but Jesus looked through these outer effects to the inner cause. He sees not only the paralysis

in the man's body, but also the sin in the man's soul. By passing over the obvious disease, and speaking of only the unseen sin, He shows clearly what His mission is not and what it is. His mission is not to perpetuate this life, but to lead all His people through the gate of death into the life eternal. His word, accordingly, is not, "Thy body shall not die," but, "Thy sins are forgiven."

II. Sin—its removal by the Lord. (1) It is by a free pardon that sin is removed, and its eternal consequences averted. (2) The Saviour to whom this needy man was brought had power to forgive sins. (3) Christ has power to forgive on earth. The word limits the position, not of the Forgiver, but of the forgiven. (4) *The Son of man* hath power to forgive. (5) Christ the Saviour, in coming to a sinful, suffering man, desires not only that he should be saved hereafter, but also happy now. "Son, be of good cheer," was the Great Physician's first salutation.

W. ARNOT, *Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life*, p. 252.

I. SICKNESS is the witness to us of wrong that has been done. It is the handwriting on the wall wherewith a man's hand writes the word that tells us that we have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. And in this sense it is a judgment; it makes known to us the curse of sin. But that is not all. The misery of sickness witnesses not only to the wrong done, but also to the right that has been lost. Sickness is the protest made by nature against the misdirection of her forces.

II. We know so well that the recovery of our sickness depends upon the stoppage of the secret wrong. And yet we find ourselves again and again doing the wrong that we purpose to stop. In discovering the misery of our sin we discover also our powerlessness to cease from sinning. We cannot do the things that we would; and the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away our inherent and ineradicable will to sin. There is butione hope. If only a new fire could be shot into our chilled and flagging heart; if only a fresh jet of force could infuse itself into our jaded and diminished will; if only a spring of living waters could be opened within that naked stone which we once called our heart—that, and that only, can save us, for that, and that only, can cut off the supplies of sin which continually reinforce our habitual disease.

III. And it can be done—it has been done—by that beautiful

law, so natural, so rational, so intelligible, of vicarious atonement. By that law, which is already and always at the very root of our human life, it is possible for God, without disturbing or traversing one atom of that natural order which He has Himself sanctioned by creating—possible for Him to intervene, to break off the fearful entail, to shatter the chain that our sins have forged. The spirit of sacrifice is the creator of ethics, and God sanctioned and sealed the entire body of ethical verities by which human society is bonded and fed when He sent His Son, who knew no sin, to be made a curse for us, and to bear on His shoulders the iniquity of the world.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND, *Creed and Character*, p. 205.

REFERENCES: ix. 2.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, 2nd series, p. 283; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., pp. 262, 283; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 38; J. Keble, *Sermons for the Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 218. ix. 2-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 167. ix. 6.—J. Vaughan, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 14; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 224; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 145; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 420. ix. 9.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 285; T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 164; J. B. Heard, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 209; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 248; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 90; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., pp. 143, 154; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 21. ix. 9-10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 190. ix. 9-13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 89; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 20; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 69.

### Chap. ix., ver. 11.—"Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

I. THE religion of the Pharisees had degenerated into a religion of hatred and contempt. There was scarcely a class which did not suffer from their fierce denunciations and supercilious disdain. The world was divided into Jew and Gentile, and on the vast mass of the Gentiles they looked as on a doomed race of no importance, as thorns to crackle in the flame, created apparently as a mere foil to the very great privileges of God's favourite, the Jew. The race of man was divided into men and women, and on women they looked with insolent disdain; carefully gathering up their robes as they entered the synagogue, lest they should so much as touch them. If this unholy scorn was the normal tone of the Pharisees towards the millions of Gentiles, of women, of Samaritans, may we not imagine the sort of feelings which they must have indulged towards the lowest members of those classes, towards those of whom they

would have spoken as the "scum and froth"—"the dregs and outcasts of society"? Now of these classes, two were especially abhorrent to them—sordid renegades who were publicans, fallen women who were harlots. We can imagine the astonishment of angry reprobation which they must have thrown into the question, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

II. With the views and doctrines of the Pharisees contrast the life and words of Christ. While there was one class, and one class only, which Christ denounced, namely the scribes and the Pharisees, He had for sinners only the call of tenderness; to sinners only was His especial mission; sinners were His especial care; it was the lost sheep over which the Good Shepherd yearned; it was for the wanderers that His heart seemed to burst with tenderness; it was upon the neck of the returning prodigal that the Father wept. He gathered the publicans to His discourses. He sat at their feasts. He chose a publican for His host. He nominated a publican to be His apostle.

III. So thought, so acted, the Saviour of the world. These facts are patent, fortunately, for every one to read. They are the *magna charta* freely granted to humanity by the great love of God. They show that the Son of God, inflexible in His estimate of sin, was infinitely compassionate in His dealings with sinners. He tried to win men from sin by perfect love; promise, not menace; appeal, not threatening; comprehension, not exclusion; the sweetness of hope, not the denunciation of wrath, that was the secret of Jesus

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 33.

REFERENCES: ix. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 352. ix. 10, 11.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 92. ix. 12.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 291; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 618; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 124. ix. 13.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 301; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 77; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 117. ix. 14-17.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 69. ix. 14-19.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 78.

Chap. ix., ver. 15.—"Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."

USE of Observances.

I. It seems at first sight as if a spiritual religion would dispense with observances altogether. And there is a sense in

which this is the case always, and there are occasions on which all observances are dispensed with altogether. For it is undeniable that observances must be secondary, and if they are elevated into the first rank they are out of place. So St. Paul tells the Galatians that he is afraid of them, because they observe days and months, and times and years. And the whole tenour of his teaching corresponds, and perpetually reminds us of his own saying, "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" In his day and in his circumstances there was plainly something which made him throw his chief weight into the scale against all observances.

II. Our Lord, however, in answering the question of the Pharisees, why His disciples did not fast, gives us the precise measure of all such observances. If we had the Bridegroom always with us, we should never need them. But the Bridegroom leaves us sometimes, and then we cannot do without them. He has left us, and the Church has found just what He predicted, that much which was needless while He stayed became needful when He was gone. The Church found that she must do what our Lord implied that she would have to do, provide for the needs of human nature in the ordinary fashion, and make rules to keep alive the warmth and power of faith, just as rules are made for the purposes of any ordinary human society. We are tempted to fancy that these observances must be a hindrance, not a help; that what is wanted are power, and life, and passion, not recurring seasons, and reminders of great events, and services in due order. But it is not so. Life and power are wanted; but they are not hindered by the rules of religious life; and meanwhile those very rules often aid them in their weakness. What is true of the Church is true of each one of us. Observances have two uses for every soul. If the Lord be absent, it is by them that we seek Him. If the Lord be present, it is by them that we meet Him.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 131.

REFERENCES: ix. 15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 81 ix. 16.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 268.

Chap. ix., ver. 17.—"Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

THERE is an ever-living freshness in the words of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels. In reading them we are not with mere antiquarian curiosity studying the history of events wholly

unconnected with ourselves, or recalling a state of society which belongs entirely to the buried past; rather we find ourselves presented with prophecies of the ever-recurring future, and with anticipations of the principles which may be applied to the interpretation of the great moral and religious problems of modern society Securely connected beneath the letter of the original utterances there lies ready for our apprehension the eternal spirit, which may be our unerring guide in practice. Such a vitality of utterance we may surely discern in the parabolic saying of the text.

I. What is the interpretation of these parables of the new patch on the old garment, and of the new wine put into the old bottles, or leathern skins after Eastern fashion? Is it not something of this sort? The old forms of piety amid which John and his disciples still move are not suited to the new religious life emanating from Me. The new life needs new forms.

II. Neither Christ nor His Apostles attempted to put the Gospel as a patch upon the old garment of the Mosaic law, to pour the new wine of the spiritual dispensation into the old bottle of legal rules. They offered the Gospel as a system of principles and laws and motives, not of rules and precepts and observances. They invited men to a rejoicing sense of liberty, as the appropriate temper for that reception of the doctrine of salvation by Christ; they urged men towards the attainment of that perfect love which would cast out fear; they proclaimed that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; they made the ritual and ceremonial element in religion altogether subordinate to the moral and spiritual. Faith working by love, not ceremonial observance, was the characteristic expression of the Christian life.

III. The Christian Church did not at once rise to the grandeur of the new idea of religion. It constantly exhibited tendencies to fall back upon the old. It was afraid of letting liberty degenerate into license. Men who had become accustomed to all the venerable traditions of the old law did not straightway find pleasure in throwing them off. They represented Christianity as a mere reproduction of Judaism under other names. They made the ministry of the Word and sacraments a priesthood, whose main office was to offer material sacrifice; they violated the whole spirit of the New Testament, and the language of the early Church, by calling the Lord's day the Sabbath; they tried to limit the very name of religion to the

observance of a rule of life which prescribed the most minute precepts for the conduct of every hour; a rigid asceticism was glorified as the fulfilment of counsels of perfection. "New wine must be put into new bottles" embodies a principle which the Church of Christ in all ages forgets at her peril. That principle is, that new wants create new institutions; a new spirit must express itself in other forms, adapted to the new occasion. There must be in all the arrangements of life an elasticity, a power of self-development, an expansiveness, a fertility of invention, an evoking of new energies. New conditions of society demand different methods.

CANON INCE, *Oxford Review*, Feb. 18th, 1885.

**Chap. ix., vers. 18, 19, 23-26.**

THE Raising of Jairus' Daughter.

I. The miracles of raising from the dead, whereof this is the first, have always been regarded as the mightiest outcomings of the power of Christ; and with justice. They are those, also, at which unbelief is readiest to stumble, standing as they do in more direct contrast than any other to all which our experience has known. The line between health and sickness is not definitely fixed; the two conditions melt one into the other, and the transition from this to that is frequent. In like manner storms alternate with calms; the fiercest tumult of the elements allays itself at last; and Christ's word which stilled the tempest did but anticipate and effect in a moment what the very conditions of nature must have effected in the end. But between being and the negation of being the opposition is not relative, but absolute; between death and life a gulf lies which no fact furnished by our experience can help us even in imagination to bridge over. It is nothing wonderful, therefore, that miracles of this class are signs more spoken against than any other among all the mighty works of the Lord.

II. Note the relation in which the three miracles of this transcendent character stand to one another; for they are not exactly the same miracle repeated three times over, but may be contemplated as in an ever-ascending scale of difficulty, each a more marvellous outcoming of the great power of Christ than the preceding. Science itself has arrived at the conjecture that the last echoes of life ring in the body much longer than is commonly supposed; that for a while it is full of the reminiscences of life. This being so, we shall at once recognize in the quickening of him who had been four days dead a still mightier

wonder than in the raising of the young man who was borne out to his burial; and again, in *that* miracle a mightier outcoming of Christ's power than in the present, wherein life's flame, like some newly extinguished taper, was still more easily rekindled, when thus brought in contact with Him who is the fountain-flame of all life. Immeasurably more stupendous than all these will be the wonder of that hour when all the dead of old, who will have lain (some of them for many thousand years) in the dust of death, shall be summoned from, and shall leave, their graves at the same quickening voice.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Miracles*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: ix. 18-26.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 280; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 469. ix. 20.—J. Ker, *Sermons*, p. 186.

**Chap. ix., ver. 21.—"She said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole."**

I. CONSIDER what this sufferer said within herself. (1) As displaying ignorance of the true nature of Christ. (2) As displaying not only ignorance, but error, along with truth. (3) Was her faith, then, a foolish credulity? Not at all. She knew the wonders He had wrought on others, and responded to goodness and truth. His language and demeanour expressed this, and on this convincing evidence she trusted Jesus and was healed.

II. Consider this feeling toward Christ, as finding recognition wider than the Christian Church.

III. Remember that Christ calls us, beyond slight contact, to the closest union with Himself.

PROF. HERBERT, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 32.

JESUS CHRIST was never in a hurry. He had no occasion to be so, because He was conscious of supreme power, and of a capacity to do whatever He in His perfect wisdom deemed right. So that you perceive nowhere throughout the whole of these Gospels the least sign of eager anxiety, the slightest indication of personal uncertainty. He moves on His way, quiet, comparatively undisturbed, with the calmness of conscious strength. This thought is suggested, because the incident before us shows our Lord allowing Himself to be interrupted in a great work which He had undertaken to do, and yet being undisturbed by the interruption. Why should the Son of God be in haste? Can He not do as He wills? Does He not come forth from the bosom of Him of whom it is said, "A

thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night"?

Notice: I. That the touch of the diseased woman was an expression of conscious need. Necessity, trouble, incurable sorrow bring us to the Great Healer in some way or other.

II. The touch was an expression of superstition and faith. There was surely something of a vague belief that any kind of contact with Christ would bring her blessing. The incident suggests an inquiry as to what kind of faith and how much faith is necessary to bring us into contact with Christ. That some faith is essential is clear; for had she not asked, the probability is the woman would not have received healing. But the fact of her healing shows how the least faith, the smallest effort of belief, may bring a response from Christ. We may learn that the first and chief thing for our soul's need is contact with Christ, and that attained, we shall find that from the spiritual touch of the Saviour we gain forgiveness and newness of life. From Him virtue passes into our souls, and faith deepens and strengthens into perfect confidence and rest.

W. BRADEN, *Sermons*, p. 183.

I. How many evils sin has brought into the world. The seeds of sin are lying dormant in our souls, and even when brought into God's family, and made His children by adoption and grace, we still unite in the mortifying confession, "There is no health in us."

II. Another reflection drawn from the history is, that we are too much disposed to seek human help, instead of going directly to God.

III. However deep-seated and desperate the condition of the soul's health, the Saviour can help us.

IV. Note the secrecy with which the afflicted woman sought help of Jesus. "Nor is her wish for secrecy unbelief, but simply humility—humility, accompanied with such faith in Him that she feels assured that a touch of His raiment will suffice."

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 475.

FAITH's Approach to Christ.

I. Faith comes with a deep despair of all other help but Christ's.

II. Faith has a divine power to discover Christ.

III. Faith comes with an implicit trust in Christ.

IV. Faith seeks, for its comfort, close contact with Christ.

**V.** Faith, with all its imperfections, is accepted by **Christ.**
**VI.** Faith feels a change from the touch of Christ.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 186.

REFERENCES: **ix. 21.**—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,809; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 48; T. M. Herbert, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 40. ix. 23, 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 251; S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 246. ix. 23-25.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 30. ix. 25.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii., p. 8. ix. 27-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,355; vol. xxvi., No. 560. ix. 27-31.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 97; G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 101. **ix. 28.**—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 288. **ix. 29.**—W. Gresley, *Practical Sermons*, p. 61. ix. 30.—Archbishop Benson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 81. ix. 32, 35.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 106. **ix. 33.**—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 306.

Chap. ix., ver. 35.—**"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."**

CHRIST the Physician.

In Christ we are allied to the highest and the largest ideal of the most disinterested efforts for the physical and moral welfare of man that our earth has ever seen. Times, indeed, there were in His ministry when it might even have seemed that the human body had a greater claim on His attention than the human soul.

I. Now it would be a great mistake to suppose that this feature of our Saviour's ministry was accidental or inevitable. Nothing in His work was accident; all was deliberate; all had an object. Nothing in His work was inevitable, except so far as it was freely dictated by His wisdom and His mercy. To suppose that this union of prophet and physician was determined by the necessity of some rude civilization, such as that of certain tribes in Central Africa and elsewhere, or certain periods and places in mediæval Europe, when knowledge was scanty, when it was easy and needful for a single person at each social centre to master all that was known on two or three great subjects—this is to make a supposition which does not apply to Palestine at the time of our Lord's appearance. The later prophets were prophets and nothing more—neither legislators, nor statesmen, nor physicians. We may infer with reverence and certainty that Christ's first object was to show Himself as the Deliverer and Restorer of human nature as a

whole—not of the reason and conscience merely, without the imagination and the affections—not of the spiritual side of men's nature, without the bodily; and therefore He was not only Teacher, but also Physician.

II. What is the present function of the human body? We see in it at once a tabernacle and an instrument; it is the tabernacle of the soul and the temple of the Holy Ghost. And thus the human body is, in our idea, itself precious and sacred; it is an object of true reverence, if only by reason of Him whom it is thus permitted to house and to serve.

III. And again, there is the destiny of the body. As we Christians gaze at it we know that there awaits it the humiliation of death and decay; we know also that it has a future beyond; the hour of death is the hour of resurrection. The reconstruction of the decayed body presents to us no greater difficulties than its original construction; and if we ask the question how it will be, we are told, upon what is for us quite sufficient authority, that our Lord Jesus Christ "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 81.

REFERENCES: ix. 35.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 18 ix. 35-38.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 354; R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 157.

Chap. ix., ver. 36.—"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

I. OUR Lord here teaches us how to think of, or to look at, men. (1) Notice how here, as always to Jesus Christ, the outward was nothing, except as a symbol and manifestation of the inward, how the thing that He saw in a man was not the external accidents of circumstances or position; but His true, clear gaze, and His loving, wise heart, went straight to the essence of the thing, and dealt with the man, not according to what he might happen to be in the categories of earth, but to what he was in the categories of heaven. Christian men and women, do you try to do the same thing? (2) Think of the condition of humanity apart from Christ—shepherdless. Unless Jesus Christ be both Guide and Teacher, we have neither guide nor teacher—shepherdless without Him. Do you ever think of the depth of pathetic, tragic meaning that there is in that verse in one of the Psalms,

"Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death"? There they sit, because there is no hope in rising and moving. They would have to grope if they arose, and so with folded hands they sit, like the Buddha, which one great section of heathenism has taken as being the true emblem and ideal of the noblest life. Absolute passivity lays hold upon them all—torpor, stagnation, no dream of advance or progress; the sheep are dejected, despairing, anarchic, shepherdless, away from the Christ. God give us grace to see the condition of humanity and our own apart from Him.

II. Christ teaches us not only how to think of men, but how that sight should touch us. "He was moved with compassion on them when He saw the multitudes"—with the eye of a God, and the heart of a man. Pity, not aversion; pity, not anger; pity, not curiosity; pity, not indifference. Compassion, and not curiosity, is an especial lesson for the day to the more thoughtful and cultured among our congregations.

III. The text teaches how Christ would have us act after such emotion be built and based on such a vision. I will name three things—(1) personal work; (2) prayer; (3) help.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 305.

I. CHRIST'S habitual look at men had regard to them as suffering. No other aspect of life seems to have struck Him with equal force, or to have so claimed His thought, that He did not feel its sorrow. The foundation of His work is ethical, but the tone is drawn from His sensibilities rather than from His judicial sentiments; to get rid of the sorrow is the end.

II. The question arises, Is this a true or a false, a healthy or a morbid, view of human life? The question cannot be answered by determining whether there is more happiness or suffering. Suffering is real, and a sympathizing mind will pause upon it rather than look through to the underlying joy, and especially a great pitying nature like Christ's will pause upon it and see little else. It is not a matter of more or less, but of appealing anguish. Christ was a Man of sorrows, but not His own sorrow; a Man of griefs, but griefs that were His own only as He took them from others into His own heart.

III. It is not a long step from the Christ's pity to that it evokes in those who believe in Him. There is something beyond a sense of justice and fair dealing, something beyond even goodwill and love. The highest relation of man to man is that of compassion. Hardly separable from love in words, it may be

in conception; it is love at its best, love quick, love in its highest gradation; it is the brooding, the yearning feeling, the love that protects while it enfolds. Our sorrows are not our own, to be secretly wept over or soon dispelled. It should be the first question with any one who suffers, as it is nearly always the first impulse, To what service of ministering pity am I called? For the ultimate purpose of God in humanity is to bring it together. The main human instrument is that we are considering; it is the finest and most dominant force lodged in our common nature; it brings men up to the point from which they launch into the universe and live.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 131.

**Chap. ix., vers. 36-38.**

**JESUS Seeing the People.**

Note: I. What Jesus saw. He saw the multitudes. The range of His vision could not be limited, nor His ministry confined, to the immediate requirement of the more palpable of life's sufferings. He saw the multitude scattered abroad, and as sheep without a shepherd. He commiserates their condition instead of condemning them, and sees that the people had been sinned against quite as much as they had sinned. The people were scattered and distressed. Sin is sure to scatter; untruth always disunites. Man was far from man as Christ saw him; he did not know himself, and because he did not know himself he could not know his fellow, and could never know much of either until he had known God as the Father of both.

II. What Christ felt. "He was moved with compassion on them." The farther we are from sin the more we can be to the sinful. When we are sinful ourselves we avenge, as we have ability, the sins committed against us by others. The day is afar off, but it is coming, when society will seek to save, and will save itself by saving, and not by condemning. Jesus was tempted like as we are, and yet was without sin; and being without sin He is able to succour them that are tempted. He could pity and help because there was no sin in Him.

III. What He said. When Jesus spake He changed His figure, ceased to be the shepherd, and became the husbandman. To Him the world was as a harvest-field, ready to be gathered. Christ calls us all to the harvest. There is work for us all on the field, for His field is the world. If you cannot do you can prepare to do by cultivating definiteness of purpose and consecration of heart. The labourers who labour must not be discouraged

because the labourers are few; the Master knows how few you are and how great is the field.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 119.

REFERENCES: ix. 36.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 18; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 121; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 30; W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 290; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 24. ix. 36, 37.—E. W. Benson, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 177. ix. 36-38.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 141; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 116. ix. 37, 38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,127. ix. 38.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 1; R. Heber, *Sermons Preached in England*, p. 232.

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**Chap. x., vers. 1-20.**

JESUS giving His Power to His Followers.

Note: I. The work Christ's followers were to do. They were to do the mysterious work which the Master had done, and to preach as both He and John had preached. They were sent forth to do and to serve, but were done by and served as they went. Having been entrusted with the responsibility of a great message, and furnished with a power which was the envy and amazement of all, there ought to be an elevation of their consciousness into some correspondence with the dignity of their theme and the mystery of their power. They were called as servants, but were sent forth as friends in the communion of the mystery of the Master's power. He ought to have been more to them for ever after that.

II. The trials they were to endure. The brute forces of the world would be aroused against them as they preached the kingdom that cometh not by observation, and the savage in the man would be awakened by their cry for repentance. Law, as expounded by the scribe, and administered by the magistrate, would be made to appear against them. The force of religious prejudice and conviction was to be directed against them, and zeal for God to be turned to the detriment of God's servants. What were they against the mighty host coming up against them? Nothing, indeed, unless the eye rested on God.

III. The conduct they were to pursue. (1) Whatever should betide them, they were to remember Him by whom they had been sent. (2) They were to be wise as serpents. The apostle of any movement needs the by no means ordinary combination of zeal and wisdom. (3) They were to be harmless as doves: their wisdom was to be used neither to hurt nor to unnecessarily

annoy. Their only concern was to be both harmless and wise, beyond that they had nothing and they had all, for they had God.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 137.

REFERENCES: x. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,127. x. 1, 2.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., No. 702. x. 1-4.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 30; Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 177; *Ibid.*, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 125.

Chap. x., ver. 2.—"Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother."

BROTHERHOOD in Christ.

The world is covered with a network of brotherhoods. The first and simplest relationships run in and out in every direction, and multiply themselves till hardly any man stands entirely alone. This network of brotherhoods, like every evident fact of life, sets us to asking three questions: (1) What is its immediate cause? (2) What is its direct result? (3) What is its final reason?

I. The natural relations which exist between man and man have one at least of their purposes, and one of their most sacred purposes, in this—that they are God's great system, along whose lines He means to diffuse His truth and influence through the world. Every higher and more spiritual influence avails itself of this same first fact of related human life, this fact that no man stands alone, but each is bound by some kind of kinship in with all the rest.

II. If religion spreads itself among mankind along the lines of man's natural affections and relationships, the results which we may look for will be two: (1) the exaltation and refinement of those affections and relationships themselves; and (2) the simplifying and humanizing of religion. We all know how the natural relations between human creatures all have their downward as well as their upward tendency, their animal as well as their spiritual side. The lusts of power and pride, and cruelty and passion, all come in to make foul and mean that which ought to be pure and high. What is there that can keep the purity and loftiness of domestic life? What is there that can preserve the colour and glory of the family like the perpetual consciousness, running through all the open channels of its life, that they are being used to convey the truth and power of God? The father who counts himself one link in the ever-developing perpetuation of truth among mankind, handing on to his children what has been already handed down to him; the brother who without struggle or effort feels all that he believes flowing

through this life into the open life of the brother by his side; are not these the men in whom brotherhood and fatherhood keep their true dignity, and never grow base, jealous, tawdry, or tyrannical? Everything keeps its best nature only by being put to its best use. PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 76.

REFERENCE: x. 2.—J. Foster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 366.

Chap. x., vers. 2-4.—"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these," etc.

A MERE list of names! A good deal may be made of a list of names, but it depends on whose names they are. There is a Book which has in it nothing but names. That Book would interest the universe if it were to be opened up and read—"the Lamb's Book of Life." We may look on these men—

I. Officially. They are selected, chosen, set apart by Christ as apostles. (1) The first thing suggested here is the marvellous results that flowed out of this selection, and the great fact out of which it arose. (2) The second thing is the little power naturally there would seem to have been in these men to have produced any great results. On the whole they were respectable men, of good common education, but not cultivated; men of no rank; some of them had a natural power, a rude energy, a faculty of speech, so we may conclude, when we find them called "Sons of Consolation" or "Sons of Thunder." (3) Thirdly, there is the list complete; twelve men are selected and ordained, all of them, and yet comparatively few of them stand out large and in full length in history.

II. Personally. We may read it as a list of persons in society and in the Church. Notice (1) how the Gospel embraces persons of different temper and tastes; yet all are looked on by the eye of the loving Father, and all are part of the one Church. Here is Peter, with his boldness and yet cowardice; John, with his sensitiveness; Nathanael, with his habit of retirement. (2) Another thing to be observed here is how the good cause may be advanced by relationship, friendship, brotherhood. There are three pairs of brothers in this list. (3) A catalogue might be made out of a Church book of those whose previous lives had been rather questionable. Observe how we can understand the Christian mellowing with age. The better nature comes to be developed, and the imperfections slough off, and are gone. So is it with the true man; he grows up into Christ.

T. BINNEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 8.

REFERENCES: x. 2-4.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*

vol. xxii., p. 312. x. 3.—J. Foster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 403; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 171; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 79; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,964. x. 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 105.

Chap. x., ver. 5.—"These twelve Jesus sent forth."

THE Obscure Apostles.

Half of these twelve are never heard of again as doing any work for Christ. Peter and James and John we know; the other James and Judas have possibly left us short letters; Matthew gives us a Gospel; and of all the rest no trace is left.

I. The first thought which this peculiar and unexpected silence suggests is of the true worker in the Church's progress. Men are nothing except as instruments and organs of God. He is all, and His whole fulness is in Jesus Christ. Christ is the sole Worker in the progress of His Church. That is the teaching of all the New Testament.

II. This same silence of Scripture, as to so many of the Apostles, may be taken as suggesting what the real work of these delegated workers was. Peter's words, on proposing the election of a new apostle, lay down the duty as simply to bear witness of the resurrection. Not supernatural channels of mysterious grace, not lords over God's heritage, not even leaders of the Church, but bearers of a testimony to the great historical fact on the acceptance of which all belief in an historical Christ depended then, and depends now. Christ is the true Worker, and all our work is but to proclaim Him, and what He has done and is doing for ourselves and for all men.

III. We may gather, too, the great lesson of how often faithful work is unrewarded and forgotten. The world has a short memory, and as the years go on the list that it has to remember grows so crowded that it is harder and harder to find room to write a new name on it, or to read the old. All that matters very little. The notoriety of our work is of no consequence. The earnestness and accuracy with which we strike our blow are all-important, but it matters nothing how far it echoes.

IV. Finally, we may add that forgotten work is remembered, and unrecorded names are recorded above. In that last vision of the great city which the seer beheld descending from God, we read that in its "foundations were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." All were graven there—the inconspicuous names carved on no record of earth, as well as the familiar ones cut deep in the rock, to be seen of all men for ever.

A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 265.

REFERENCES: x. 5.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 141. x. 5-23

—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 135. x. 5-42.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 99. x. 6.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 356; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 179; W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 133.

**Chap. x., ver. 7.—"Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

We learn from this passage how needful it is for us all to remember that the kingdom of God exists now in the world. Consider—

I. What this remembrance means. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, may appear to many a man an obscure conception, a mere way of speaking, one of the old-fashioned, far-fetched expressions of Holy Scripture, belonging to the ecclesiastical style of former times, but meaning little to our modern culture. Yet it is not so. The Jews to whom it was first announced possessed the key to its meaning—they expected the Messiah, that Divine King, who would establish the kingdom of God. Pity only that so many of them spoiled that key by intruding their own worldly and fleshly thoughts into the Divine revelation. St. Paul contradicted their views when he said, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The kingdom of heaven is among us, therefore heaven has come down to earth. God has come forth from His hidden place that we may know Him as a people knows its king, may have communion with Him, and may love Him, as a subject loves his sovereign. Our labour is from henceforth no longer earthly and perishable; it reaches on to heaven. Here with our poor labours we may gain for ourselves everlasting possessions, may hold fellowship with the everlasting God, and with all His saints. Each man labours, not for himself alone, but working together with all the forces of the kingdom of God. One reaches out his hand to another, not for things immediate and visible only, but for things eternal; we labour together for the kingdom of God, and thus our work is carried on in love and friendship.

II. Who are those that most need this reminder? (1) Those who are well satisfied with earth, who blindly live by the day, apparently oblivious even to the idea of a kingdom of God. (2) Those who by a spiritualizing of earthly things seek to transform the earth itself into the kingdom of heaven. To them I would say, The kingdom that you strive to raise is here already—no realm of dreams, but a kingdom of glorious reality;

break loose from your enchanted world, and believe in the truth which has appeared among us! (3) Those who think their own power sufficient to establish the kingdom of heaven. To them I would say, The heaven that is to fill you with joy and gladness must be high above yourself; it must be a rich and abundant heaven; it must come down from above. Receive it as a gift of grace. You cannot take it by force; become, then, as a little child, and receive it as the gift of love.

R. ROTHE, *Predigten*, p. 52.

REFERENCE: x. 7, 8.—T. Spurgeon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 152.

### Chap. x., ver. 8.—"Freely ye have received, freely give."

THE opening of this commission, in a world eaten up by selfishness, proclaimed the advent of a new era, and was the sign of the establishment of the kingdom of God among men. From that time forth there would be a band of men upon earth consecrated to minister to its woes and needs.

I. These servants of the kingdom of heaven, of which we, too, are subjects and ministers, were sent forth to a practical conflict with the actual sufferings and maladies of mankind. The Lord does not content Himself with proclaiming truth to our spirits, leaving our bodies to be wasted with disease, and pinched by hunger, while our hearts are wrung with anguish. Every actual wrong and pain grieved and troubled Him, and He meant that His kingdom should do away with it all. He came to enter His protest against all which made earth's life so unlike heaven's, and to promise that the lost harmony, for which man was unconsciously pining, should be restored.

II. I gather a second broad fact about the ministry of this kingdom to the world from the language of the text. It rests man's duty to man on man's duty and relationship to God. "Freely ye have received, freely give." It is the only law which can girdle the earth with benignant ministers, and drop dews of blessing on each succeeding generation of mankind.

III. The ground of this duty the text declares, "Freely ye have received." Whatever you hold by this tenure you hold as trustees. The very word "freely" seems in fatal opposition to (1) that selfish sense of possession which set up the "I" and the "my" as kings over all our communications; and only gives when the gift is likely to be humbly recognized, and to return, at any rate, a tribute of praise. (2) It equally, though not so palpably, condemns that giving by rule and measure

which is the fashion nowadays. Such a method binds the very freeness of spirit which the Gospel enjoins and inspires.

IV. Consider that this principle alone (1) meets the need of humanity; (2) vindicates the method of the Divine government; (3) fulfils the purpose of the Lord.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Divine Life in Man*, p. 335.

REFERENCE: x. 10.—J. O. Wills, *The Dundee Pulpit*, p. 185.

Chap. x., vers. 12, 13.—"And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you."

I. THE God of all peace sends peace to all His creatures. As He sends the light, as He sends the air, so He sends peace. And in token that He desires peace for us, He has set apart and empowered and accredited certain men to deliver it. The fact that there is a ministry at this moment is a proof that God means peace for us. But it all depends upon one thing—upon adaptation. The peace is to the house, but the question whether the house or any one in it can have the peace turns upon the point of adaptation. "If the house is worthy"—that is, if there be a fitness or adaptation in the house to receive—then the peace will enter. But if the house be not worthy, then the peace will not enter, but it will rebound, it will find no correspondence in the thing which it seeks to light upon.

II. Consider what this peace means. (1) It is peace with God—the peace which a man feels when his sins are forgiven, and he knows that God is no longer his enemy, but his Friend. (2) It is peace through the blood of Jesus Christ. It is the peace which has no fear in it. It is the peace which gives a man strength to live and confidence to die. (3) It is a peace within—between a man and himself. His conscience, being sprinkled, is at peace; and the past does not now awake up to torment him, and the man is one, which he was not before; his heart is single, and singleness of heart is peace. (4) It is peace with the whole world. The peace with God made a peace within; and the peace within makes peace without. He is too humble to quarrel, and too little in his own eyes to see wrong in other men. He contemplates God till he grows like Him; as God is, so is he in this world; and God is love.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 276.

REFERENCES: x. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,370; J. H. Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 367. x. 19-20.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 394. x. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 554.

Chap. x., ver. 23.—"When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

We have here a precept, and a reason for it. Both are difficult. The precept is unusual, and the reason ambiguous.

I. The precept is a precept of prudence. It says, There is a great work before you—a work which requires workmen. The labourers are few at the best, and they must not be made fewer by wanton self-sacrifices. Think of the work, think of the object, think of souls, think of the Saviour; think of these more than of yourselves. Martyrdom itself may be a sublime selfishness, enthusiasm may exaggerate even sacrifice; or, at least, the sacrifice of the life may be nobler, more heroic, more divine than the sacrifice of the death. Each as God wills; but you must interpret the will of God by the exigencies of the work. Flight may be courage, if it be flight for Christ and with Christ.

II. The work of Christ in the world will never be finished till He comes. Not only will the workmen, one by one, be removed by death—the work itself will be cut short, unfinished, by the advent of Christ. "Ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come." Our Lord thus ministers to our necessities by warning us against several mistakes which are apt to spoil and ruin true work. One of these is the demand beforehand for a roundness and completeness of defined duty, which is not often to be found, and which must certainly not be waited for. The life and work, and the Christ-work of which this text tells, are never finished till the Son of man comes. (1) One reason for this lies in the mere sequence of human generations. Births and deaths are incessant. "One generation goeth, and another generation cometh," but they are both on the stage at once during a large part of the lifetime of earth, and the board is never cleared for a new beginning. (2) Another and a deeper reason lies in the nature of the work. The most real work of all is the intangible, impalpable thing which we call influence. Influence is the thing which Christ looks for, and it is an indefinite, and so an interminable thing. (3) We can see one other reason for this arrangement—the incompleteness of all work that is worth the name; and it is the security thus given for the salubriousness of labour.

C. J. Vaughan, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 257.

Reference: x. 23.—H. Ware, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 202

Chap. x., vers. 24, 25.

I. LIKENESS to the teacher in wisdom is the disciple's perfection. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." "The disciple is not greater than his master." "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master." If that be a true principle, that the best that can happen to the scholar is to tread in his teacher's footsteps, to see with his eyes, to absorb his wisdom, to learn his truth, we may apply it in two opposite directions. First, it teaches us the limitations, and the misery, and the folly of taking men for our masters; and then, on the other hand, it teaches us the large hope, the blessing, freedom, and joy of having Christ for our Master. (1) Look first at the principle as bearing upon the relation of disciple and human teacher. All such teachers have their limitations. Each man has his little circle of favourite ideas, that he is perpetually reiterating. In fact it seems as if one truth was about as much as one teacher could manage, and as if whensoever God had any great truth to give to the world He had to take one man and make him its sole apostle; so that teachers become mere fragments, and to listen to them is to dwarf and narrow oneself. It is safe to follow Christ absolutely, and Him alone. In following Christ as our absolute Teacher there is no sacrifice of independence or freedom of mind, but listening to Him is the very way to secure that in its highest degree.

II. Turn to the second application of this principle. Likeness to the Master in life is the law of a disciple's conduct. There is no discipleship worth naming which does not at least attempt that likeness. They whose earthly life is following Christ, with faltering steps and afar off, shall have for their heavenly blessedness, they shall "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

III. Likeness to the Master in relation to the world is the fate that the disciple must put up with. If we are like Jesus Christ in conduct, and if we have received His word as the truth upon which we repose, depend upon it, in our measure and in varying fashions, we shall have to bear the same kind of treatment from the world. If you do not know what it is to find yourselves out of harmony with the world, I am afraid it is because you have less of the Master's spirit than you have of the world's. The world loves its own. If you are not of the world, the world will hate you. If it does not, it must be because, in spite of your name, you belong to it.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, June 18th, 1885.

REFERENCES: x. 24, 25.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p. 179.

H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 195. x. 24-42.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., pp. 145, 154. x. 25.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 317.

**Chap. x., vers. 26-28.**

JESUS Comforting and Warning.

Consider—I. What the disciples were not to fear. They were not to fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Man's power in God is very great, but out of Him very little. He is not able to kill the soul; he can, however, kill the body, and the power to kill the body is, after all, a terrible power. It was not in disdain of the body, with its functions and sensibilities, that Christ said, "Fear not them which kill the body." But if the body must be wasted in the path of duty, it must go; if the hands and feet must be pierced, the Master taught that the decease must be accomplished, "for the servant is not above his Lord."

II. He warns them of something that should be feared. "Rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The fear which they were not to have of men was that vague dread which would unman them for the service of their life. The word "fear" has a very different complexion in this connection from the word "fear" in such an injunction as "Fear the Lord." The text says to us, Fear him, the arch-enemy, unto whose power you may commit yourselves, the enemy of your souls. The destroyer of body and of soul comes to us all, and finds much in us—much in our lower passions, and much in our noblest faculties. Sin, whatever form and by whatever means appealed to, fear ye him.

III. What they were to do. They were to speak in light what they heard in darkness. There are dark and secret places in every life. It depends much on ourselves whether or not these dark and secret places are a gain or a loss to us. A loss if we cannot be still in the dark, and fearless and calm enough to hear what the darkness tells; a gain if we are still enough to hear and understand what is told us. If you could be quiet through the night, you would have something to say on the morrow.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 153.

REFERENCES: x. 26, 27.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i. p. 372. x. 27.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts* p. 27; Phillips Brooks, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 56. x. 27, 28.—J. Berry, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 283. x. 29.—G. T. Coster, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 406. x. 29, 30.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 243. x. 29-31.—H. E. Bennett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 43.

Chap. x., ver. 30.—"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

I. Our Saviour's words were evidently intended to convey the general comfort of the truth that His people are exceedingly dear and precious in His sight; that they always live in His thoughts; and that He is interested in, and watches over and superintends, the least possible matter which concerns their happiness. But specially as regards their bodies; for the whole line of thought about the "sparrows" and about the little "hairs" springs out of the words, "Fear not them which kill the body."

II. God never exposes His jewels till He has catalogued them. It is a safe and pleasant thought, that all which goes to make life to us—all we prize and hold most dear—God has placed it and counted it in His own treasury. It cannot be wronged, and it cannot be injured, and it cannot be touched but He is aware of it; and He has made Himself responsible for it.

III. Seeing then that it is so, we should (1) never be afraid to pray about the little things; (2) never be afraid of feeling ourselves in a centre, about which God is making all kind things to circulate. Do not hesitate to believe that God is working for you in the most express and direct manner possible. (3) And go on without anxiety, for anxiety grieves God. All you love and all you want are in God's registry; and whatever is once written there His glory is committed to it. It is quite safe. (4) And once more, remember all the inner life is there too. The sorrows and the joys, the conflicts and the peace, the earnest longings and the bitter memories, and all the soul's chequered life and shade—all are in the record.

J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 214.

References: x. 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 187; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 30.

Chap. x., ver. 31.—"Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

For us there are two things here: human fear, and Christ's Divine dissuasives from it.

I. Our fears. Happily they are not, in this country at least, of the kind that beset these first Christians, and especially these first Christian preachers. Our fears are those which may be called normal; which, at any rate, are continual, and widely entertained by Christian people. They may be divided into two kinds: those which respect this world, the temporalities of our

life; and those which respect the world to come and our spiritual state in relation to it. As regards the world and its affairs, something depends on temperament in the way individual men take things. Some go through life much more anxiously than others; they are of quicker apprehension, more hopeful, or more timid, or more sensitive. As a matter of fact, no one can doubt that some people do take a great care about worldly things. We must never forget that the noblest and fullest victory over care and fear of every kind is to be gained only by looking to, and living for, a higher world.

II. Observe how the dissuasive, the "fear not," of this passage, is supported and commended by our blessed Lord Himself. It is not merely a word of kindness and well-wishing. It is a strong argument, built up on facts and assurances of the utmost worth for the purpose for which they are used. (1) The limited character of human power, and of the power of circumstances, is, when vividly apprehended, a great dissuasive from fear. Just so much unfriendliness, or hostility, or wrong, or annoyance of any kind; and then, "after that there is no more that they can do." (2) With God is the unlimited power. And this is another reason urged in the passage in support of the Divine dissuasive, "Fear not." "He is able to cast both soul and body into hell." There is no limit to His power except the moral attributes of His own nature. (3) In one word—and this is another support of the general dissuasive—He is "our Father." There is a special, a higher care over us. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 271.

REFERENCES: x. 31.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 134. x. 32.—*Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 15. x. 33-48.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 20. x. 34.—*Ibid* vol. ix., p. 321; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 120, J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., pp. 245, 265; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 365. x. 34-38.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 379. x. 34-39.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 260. x. 35, 36.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 281.

**Chap. x., ver. 36.—"A man's foes shall be they of his own household."**

"THEY began to make excuse." There is one excuse by which we either plead the example and authority of our neighbours for doing evil, or for fear of their laughing at us and persecuting us, leave off to do good, and become even ashamed of appearing to care for it. In this state it may well be said that "a man's

foes will be they of his own household;" that nothing is so dangerous to his salvation as the principles and practice of other men with whom he is living in daily intercourse, nothing so much to be feared as that he should make their opinions his standard, instead of the declared will of God.

I. Nothing, I suppose, shows the weakness of human nature more than this perpetual craving after some guide and support out of itself—this living upon the judgment of others rather than upon our own. And it is not to be disputed that we do need a guide and support out of ourselves, if we would but choose the right one. For the bulk of mankind there is a choice of only two things—they must worship God or one another; they must seek the praise and favour of God above all things, or the praise and favour of man. Being too weak to stand alone, they must lean upon the Rock of Ages, or upon the perishing and treacherous pillar of human opinion.

II. It is so natural an excuse to deceive our consciences, that we are but doing what every one else does, that we are but doing what no one else considers to be wrong. We make it a sort of merit that in general we do follow a higher standard; and on the strength of this we think ourselves entitled to follow the lower one sometimes, when we are particularly tempted to do so. I could imagine that St. James had had much experience of people of this description, from several passages in his Epistle. Those double-minded men whom he bids to purify their hearts, and whom he tells not to think that they shall receive anything of the Lord—they apparently were persons who lived in general far above the heathen standard, who only wished to keep in reserve some convenient points on which they might gratify their evil inclinations, and say in their excuse that no one else thought there was any harm in such things. They thought and knew that there was harm in them, for their eyes had been opened by Gospel light, and they would be judged by their own knowledge, and not by their neighbours' ignorance. T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 101.

THE Sword of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I. Consider the twofold aspect of the problem which Christianity undertook to solve, the dual nature of its work. It had both to take to pieces and to reconstruct society, and this is the true key to much that is most perplexing in its history. It could not, by a simple reformation, convert the pagan empire into a kingdom of heaven, nor a pagan home into a household

of faith. But one means existed for the accomplishment of that purpose—the spiritual renewing of the individual elements of which the households and the states were composed. The condition of that renewing was a personal faith in Christ. And faith transformed the man; he passed under a higher government, and became subject to a new and absolute Lord. You see what a discomposing, dissolving force was here at work. The strain on the bonds which had held society together would be tremendous. The man would find himself under new and holy constraints, which all around thought unholy; opposed to friends, comrades, and all that he had been wont to regard as the most sacred duties of life. Those who have looked at all into the inner life of the first Christian ages know well how terrible was the rending of bonds which the love of Christ compelled.

II. But the matter does not end here. The fact of our nature is that men cannot live without Christ. Depart from us, leave us alone, men cry; and then suffer—moan till He returns. "Who will show us any good?" is in the end the cry of all pagan societies and all worldly hearts. And it really means, "O Christ, help us." The unrest of a Christless soul, a Christless nation, a Christless world is really the beginning of a vital process, which in its first stages is always a travail. The constant sorrowful failures of man's wrath and self-will to work out salvation for himself and for society are part of the method by which God is seeking to draw man to Himself. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but I am thy Saviour," is the witness which His Word is ever bearing. The same voice is ever repeating the same sentence, in the sorrows, the anguish of nations, and in the chronic miseries of all self-willed sensual hearts.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 211.

REFERENCES: x. 36.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 285. x. 36-38.—C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 319.

Chap. x., ver. 37.—"He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

IT is not for a moment to be supposed that Christ speaks in disparagement of the domestic affections. It is a question of priority, it is a question of degree. Who has the first, who has the chief claim? Is the claim of the household or the claim of Christ the stronger? This and passages like this leave no

room for doubt as to the answer. Surely Jesus Christ Himself knows what He is, and what His claims are, and what Christian discipleship is. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and He knows them by this, that they love Him—such at least is their desire and their endeavour. Him first, Him most, Him without end. That is the inner pith of Christian discipleship.

I. Here are the children of a family, rising up into life; what ought the parents to wish for them supremely? The common answer would be "Success." But what *is* success? Ought not Christian parents who love Christ supremely to be strong in the idea and belief that success of the highest kind is absolutely attainable by every one, if he will? And ought they not to give that idea to their children, and to create that faith in their hearts, as far as they can? High character is success. To mean well; to aim rightly; to strive fairly; and then to take what comes—is not *that* success, at least begun?

II. Parents may show a tendency to love son or daughter more than Christ by objecting to, or resisting as far as they can, the discipline of Providence, which is brought to bear upon them as the result of their own mistakes, failures, and sin.

III. There comes sometimes, in these human homes and families, a deeper trial yet of love and loyalty to Christ. Son or daughter is needed in the other world; the message comes, and must be obeyed. To give up so much that is precious, to have the home made dark, is not easy. To some it is for a while impossible. But Christ takes His children to Himself; and then, when all is over, if not before, His faithful ones submit without murmuring to His will, and begin to cheer and strengthen themselves with this thought, which will apply to themselves ere long, that to depart and to be with Christ is far better.

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 340.

REFERENCES: x. 37.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 34; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 321; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 53; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 301. x. 37-39.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 277. x. 38.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 33. x. 38, 39.—T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 95.

### Chap. x., ver. 39.—"For My sake."

THE Partial and the Perfect Self.

There is a self-denial which is merely an elaborate and subtle form of self-seeking. The self-sacrifice required of Christians

is a *reasonable* service; when we directly aim at doing good to others we indirectly achieve greater good for ourselves than any selfish conduct could accomplish; or, as our text puts it, he who loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it.

I. We have seen that a man is distinguished from an animal by the fact that he is able to regard his nature as a whole, and to gather up its passing experiences into the unity of a consistent life. But he is also, and still more strikingly, distinguished by the fact that he can live in the lives of others. He may so identify himself with others as to make their lives his own, and unless he does this he is not really human. It is only as our individual, narrow, exclusive, isolated self is developed into a larger, inclusive, sympathetic self that we come to our highest life.

II. The capacity of love and self-sacrifice is the capacity to make the happiness of others my own, and to identify my life with an ever-widening sphere of life beyond myself. As a rule, this capacity is called forth in early life; and when once it has been brought into exercise it should grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength.

III. The self-denial, then, which Christ requires of us is not self-destruction, but self-completion; it is not self-mutilation, but self-development; it is not self-neglect, but self-fulfilment. It will bring us gradually to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It does not ignore any of the various elements in our nature, but it enables them all to work together harmoniously for the perfecting of the whole man. He who has learned the lesson of self-sacrifice is so changed from what he was before he learned it that he may emphatically be called a new creature, and yet he is not less a man than formerly; rather, we should say, it is he and such as he alone who really deserve that exalted title.

A. W. MOMERIE, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 147.

To do God's work needs manliness and courage. It needs manliness and courage to be His loyal servant, and to defy the opinion of the great world about us—manliness, the courage which may accomplish so much in the great sad world we have to live and work in; and this must be first struggled after in our bright, sunny, if thoughtless, early days.

I. What motive is there to make and choose a life of self-sacrifice, self-surrender, self-forgetfulness, spending our lives for others instead of saving them for ourselves, instead of living

sordidly, selfishly, amassing money, building up comfort, rank, good things for ourselves, living as though the chief good were to be able to help on the fair work of Christ? What motive is set before us to induce us to choose this life? In reply, I quote the words of the text—the three strange, solemn words, spoken, we know, so often by the Master to His own, "For My sake;" the three strange words which moved the holy twelve, the hundred and twenty first disciples, the band of noble, gallant pioneers of the early Christian centuries; the three words which nerved so many men, so many weak women, children, and grey-haired, to endure all things, to bear willingly the loss of everything men count dear and precious—home, friends, even life.

II. This is the motive. Is it not a sufficient one? What appeal can be imagined more solemn, more touching, more persuasive, than these three little words? Be good men, said our Christ; be loyal, truthful, generous, loving men, helpers of the weak, comforters of the comfortless, the friends of the orphan and the widow, the mourner and the forlorn, for My sake; for My sake, who left the home of grandeur and of peace, and entered on a dark and dreadful contest to rescue you from sin and misery and endless shame and sorrow. Help Me, says the Redeemer, to carry on My mighty, eternal work of reconciliation and reparation; help on My triumph over sin and misery and sorrow.

III. See what such teaching involves. It changes everything for us: men no longer painfully obey a grave moral law from a sense of right and duty; they no longer keep themselves pure for fear of certain dread consequences; no longer, as it has been well said, look on acts of generosity and self-denial as on a "tale of bricks," to be delivered often with wearied limbs and dull, submissive hearts. The brave, manly life of self-surrender; the generous toil for others; the knightly thought for others; the loving to give rather thad to receive—these things done for His sake, the life that is lived for His sake is no longer difficult and hard, but the yoke becomes easy and the burden light when the gleam of the love of Christ falls upon them.

D. M. SPENCE, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Nov. 11th, 1880.

REFERENCES: x. 39.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 119; H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit*, 4th series, p. 135. x. 41.—J. Brierley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 73; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, p. 81; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 96.

Chap. x., vers. 41, 42.

THE Greatest in the Kingdom, and their Reward.

I. Observe, first, the three classes of character which are dealt with—"prophet," "righteous man," "these little ones." At first sight it looks as if we had here to do with a descending scale, as if we began at the top and went downwards. But we remember that Jesus Christ Himself declared that the least of the little ones was greater than the greatest who had gone before. The Christian type of character is distinctly higher than the Old Testament type, and the humblest believer is blessed above prophets and righteous men, because his eyes behold and his heart welcomes the Christ. Therefore I am inclined to think that we have here an ascending series; that we begin at the bottom and not at the top; that the prophet is less than the righteous man, and the righteous man less than the little one who believes in Christ. Here is the climax: gifts and endowments at the bottom, character and morality in the middle, and at the top faith in Jesus Christ.

II. Notice the variety of the reward according to the character. The prophet has his, the righteous man has his, the little one has his. That is to say, each level of spiritual or moral stature receives its own prize. All courses of obedient conduct have their own appropriate consequences and satisfaction. Every character is adapted to receive, and does receive, in the measure of its goodness, certain blessings and joys, here and now. "Surely the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth."

III. The best point that is here is the substantial identity of the reward to all that stand on the same level, however different may be the form of their lives. The active prophet, righteous man, or disciple, and the passive recognizer of each in that character, who receives each as a prophet, or righteous man, or disciple, stand practically and substantially on the same level; though the one of them may have his lips glowing with the Divine inspiration, and the other may never have opened his mouth for God. That is beautiful and deep. The power of sympathizing with any character is the partial possession of that character for ourselves. He that helps a prophet because he is a prophet has got the making of a prophet in himself.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 331.

**Chap. x., ver. 42.—"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."**

Good of Little Acts to please God.

I. We are apt, as to this life or the life to come, to think of God as dealing with us, in a sort of general way, just as we do, "in a lump," as we speak. We think of getting to heaven in a general way, as something purchased for us (as it indeed is) by the precious blood of Christ. We do not think what our own acts, one by one, day by day, and hour after hour, have to do with our everlasting lot. Every act in our lives is not only a step towards heaven or towards hell; it not only leads to God or from God; but wherever you are, each act has to do with your everlasting condition when there. You know how, in piece-work, not only the labour of the week or day is counted as a whole, but every single act of that labour tells. Now this is just the way in which Almighty God vouchsafes to speak to us, to deal with us. Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. As in earthly things each act of labour tells towards its end, so in our heavenly husbandry. The reward is above measure, as God is above man; yet every act done for the love of God tells towards that infinite reward.

II. In everything you do there is an inside and an outside; a part which man may see, and a part which God only can thoroughly see through. That inside is the intent with which we do it. Now in everything we do there may be a whole world of inward life. Give to God, when you wake in the morning, one strong earnest desire that in all the acts, thoughts, deeds of the day you may please Him. Whatever you do, try from time to time to do it as well as you possibly can, to please Him. All is lost which is not in some way done for Him. Some things may be done out of the very habit of desiring to do what He wills. Some things are done expressly to please Him; some things are done with a faint wish to please Him; some with a strong desire; some with a struggle, because the wish to please ourselves interferes; some things easily, because we have long been used to desire in this way to please God, and use, in God's grace, has made it easy to us. God has given us this Advent, that we may the more think of His second coming, that we may anew prepare to meet Him. How shall we prepare? Not with great things, but by preparing our

hearts, through His grace, in all, little or great, to please Him.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 31.

REFERENCES: x. 42.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 18; A. Hannay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 436; Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, p. 127.

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**Chap. xi., vers. 1-6.**

JESUS and His Doubters.

I. The doubt. It is not at all clear who doubted, whether John or his disciples, or indeed whether they all did. The stoutest faith has often failed before now; ours has often failed us in circumstances far less grievous than these. John was indeed a prophet, but he did not cease to be human on that account. He had done his work before his imprisonment. The movement was too advanced to be determined henceforth by any influences which might proceed from John's life. If his faith should for the time be unequal to the dampness and dimness of the dungeon, it had been equal to the warmth and the light of the open day. Whatever be the condition of mind his words here disclose, the question is formulated by one who can trust the Christ for telling the truth of the matter, and that when he had no confidence in the mood of his own mind or in the suggestion of his circumstances.

II. How the doubt was dealt with by the doubters. John did not wish to hear more about Christ, but something from Him. He might have called for the books of the prophets, to see again whether the anticipation there corresponded with the reality here; or have asked very helplessly, as we do, for a symposium of his disciples' opinions, and tested the merits of the Christ by their vote. To his honour be it said, he did nothing of the kind, but sent two of his disciples to ask Him, "Art Thou He that should come?"

III. How Christ treated the doubters. He seems to have received them with great deference, and thought apparently no less of them and of John than He had done before. The messengers were commanded to go and tell John, and they would be able to use words in their true meaning now that they had heard Christ. It had been a tale of general beneficence and of universal kindness, and told by one who felt the power of its every word. It carried with it its own evidence.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 171.

REFERENCES: xi. 1-6.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v.,

p. 11. xi. 1-19.—Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 8; *Ibid.*, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 162. xi. 2-4.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 164. xi. 2-5.—G. Salmon, *Non-miraculous Christianity*, p. 1; C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 22. xi. 2-6.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 404; W. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 103; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 19. xi. 2-10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 473; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 292.

**Chap. xi., ver. 3.—"Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"**

DOUBTING.

I. There is no sin in doubting. Some doubts are sinful. They are so when born of irrational prejudices or bred of an ill-regulated life. But doubt, of its own nature, cannot be sinful. For what is it? It is a certain fluctuation of the mind, this way and that way, while as yet, in the matter in question, it has no convincing evidence. The miracles of Jesus, in one aspect of them, were the Divine answers to men's sinless doubts, and also the Divine method of preventing them from arising.

II. Faith is better than doubt. We are never encouraged in the Scriptures, nor are we justified in any of the dictates of natural wisdom, in cultivating, as an inner habit, an intellectual or moral scepticism. We are encouraged to ask questions of God and man, to read books, weigh evidence, reject fallacy; in one word, to prove all things. But all this with a view to the ending of hesitancy, to the settling of faith, and the holding fast of that which is good. So that to say we are encouraged to doubt is only another way of saying we are encouraged to believe.

III. In any attempts to subdue scepticism, either in ourselves or in others, regard should be had to the proximate cause of it—or, since proximate and remote are often inseparably blended, say to the real cause—as far as that can be ascertained. (1) For instance, there can be no doubt that a large amount of mental perturbation is due to physical causes. The suffering body sometimes makes the troubled mind. In such cases physical medicaments are needed, and should be sought and used as the very balm of Gilead for the occasion. (2) Then if the doubt be purely intellectual, if it arises in the course of a natural development of thought and knowledge, then there must be applied to it an expressly intellectual solvent. (3) Let those who have moral doubts obey the Lord's injunction and come unto Him for rest. Nearly all doubts concerning Christ

or Christian truth ought to be brought in some way before Christ Himself, and given, as it were, into His own hands for solution.

A. RALEIGH, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 110; see also *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 16.

REFERENCES: xi. 3.—R. W. Dale, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 355; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 13. xi. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 111. xi. 4, 5.—E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 191. xi. 4-6.—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 49.

**Chap. xi., ver. 5.—"The poor have the Gospel preached to them."**

I. WE may always find Holy Scripture, in its endeavours to make men good, using such arguments and taking such methods as are within the understanding of the poorest and most unlearned, if they have but a will to please God. When it would teach us to love God it does not require of us to plunge ourselves into deep and high thoughts of what He is in Himself, but it tells us what He is *to us:* our Father, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we would understand how we are to love our neighbour, the Bible tells us that it must be as we love ourselves. Would we know how we are to renounce the world and cleave to Christ, it must be with such a love as causes a man to leave father and mother, brethren and sisters, and to cleave unto his wife—*i.e.*, with our very best and most entire affection. Now this is quite as much within the reach of the poorest and meanest as well as of the wisest and wealthiest among us.

II. Consider our Lord's manner of teaching, and see whether the same be said of that also. We must be, most of us, too well aware how sadly our attention first fails us, and afterwards our memory, when we are to receive instruction in a set speech or sermon; how apt we are to let go the thread of the preacher's meaning, and how difficult it is to gather it up again. How thankful, then, ought we to be towards that best of masters, that best of instructors, who has left for our use so many short and plain sayings, any one of which, rightly received into an upright heart and seriously considered, will be found to contain the whole way to heaven in a very few words.

III. Again, the Gospel is preached to the poor especially by means of the great abundance of examples with which it is stored. When we tell a poor untaught person, who has not been much used to consider the meanings of words, that he must be merciful, contented, humble, devout, it is not to be

wondered at if he often goes away without any very clear notion of what is expected from him. But when we bid him be merciful like David, contented like St. Paul, humble like the blessed Virgin, devout like St. John, and all like the holy Jesus, then, if he know anything of his Bible, he cannot fail to understand us in some measure, and he knows where to turn that he may understand us better.

IV. But the greatest privilege of all which the poor my find in the Gospel, if they will, is this: that our Master and only Saviour, when He was upon earth, chose to be one of them—chose to be so poor and needy as not to know where to lay His head. A rich man, when he is considering how to use his wealth, has to take thought how his Saviour would have acted if he had been rich in this world. A poor man, when he is considering how to bear his poverty, has only to look and see how his Lord actually did bear His, and how, in spite of it, He made Himself, even humanly speaking, most useful to the souls and bodies of all around Him. God give us all grace to make the most of those inestimable privileges which the meanest of us here enjoy.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 143.

CONSIDER the answer of our Lord to John. Jesus was to show that He was the Messiah. He was to send to His poor suffering, despairing friend and cousin a true message of hope and reassurance. He says to the two messengers, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see;" and one of these things is this, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them."

I. This, then, is one of the signs that the Son of God has come into the world. There is a Gospel for the poor. There are glad tidings for those who need them most. And of necessity, also, this is one of the marks and notes of the Church of Christ. She can hardly be a faithful handmaid of the Master who sent such a message to His poor afflicted servant, if it be not true of her that "to the poor the Gospel is preached."

II. If the preaching of the Gospel to the poor be so plain a duty of a church which would follow the example and obey the command of Christ, is it quite certain that we are rightly and fully grasping the meaning of the Gospel which is to be preached, and that we thoroughly understand how to preach it? I hold that the Gospel is larger than men are wont to think. I cannot confine my Gospel to the death of Christ, and shut out the

life of Christ. "I cannot teach a Gospel of the crucifixion, and ignore the Gospel of the resurrection. And yet the central light and glow of the Gospel is gathered round the cross of Calvary. And it is such a Gospel which is the one great spiritual need of the poor. The one thing which will brighten and beautify the darkest, meanest lives is the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the bringing home to these poor souls of the love and tenderness and sympathy of our personal Saviour, the opening up to these of visions of a life of purity and peace in Him. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," is the sort of sermon which encourages and strengthens the oppressed and exhausted toilers. It should ever be pointed out to them that Christ was a toiler Himself, personally acquainted with the difficulties and sufferings of the most abject of our race, and that He is as full of love and as ready to assist and comfort the needy as He ever was; that despotism and oppression are no part of the Gospel of Jesus. These would be the sermons, that the Gospel, which would fill our churches.

BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Cambridge Review*, Feb. 11th, 1885.

REFERENCES: xi. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 114; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 172; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 157; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 163; Bishop Magee, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 17; J. J. S. Perowne, *Contemporary Pulpit*, p. 207. xi. 6.—J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 17; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,398; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 155; Bishop Moorhouse, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 257; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 362. xi. 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 108; J. C. Hare, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 351; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 359; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 369; *Ibid.*, *Expository Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 12. xi. 7-15.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 98. xi. 9, 10.—F. W. Robertson, *Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 143.

Chap. xi., ver. 10.—**"Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee."**

I. CONSIDER this text as referring to ourselves. Every Christian man, woman, or child is a messenger of God, sent to prepare the way for Christ's coming. We are all of us, in one sense, apostles—that is, sent forth to help each other nearer to God. Our part is to build up the Church of Christ, and to strengthen His kingdom by setting a good example to others.

II. Let us remember Whose we are and Whom we serve. If we are tempted to do a mean, a false, or a disgraceful action,

if we are tempted to do or say what our conscience tells us to be wrong, then let us pause and think. I am a messenger sent by God to prepare His way before Him; how dare I commit this sin against God, and against my brother whom I injure by my example? If we would escape the unspeakable remorse of knowing that we have led astray, by our evil ways, souls for which Jesus died, let us guard more carefully our conduct and our conversation. Let us day by day ask God to make us more like our perfect pattern, Jesus Christ.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 17.

REFERENCES: xi. 10.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 117; A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 61; H. W. Grimley, *The Temple of Humanity and other Sermons*, p. 226; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 26. xi. 10, 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 20.

Chap. xi., ver. 11.—"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist," etc.

I. THE first thing which demands our notice in John the Baptist seems to be his singleness in carrying out the work which God appointed him. Consider the time when he appeared. It was no ordinary season. Many eyes were eagerly looking for the dawn of the kingdom of God. The Deliverer to come was much in the thoughts and on the lips of the devout men in Israel. Any one of pre-eminent sanctity and power of persuasion might have gathered the Jewish people round him as their Messiah. It was a moment which might well try the earnestness and singleness of purpose of any of the sons of men. Yet amidst all, how blameless is John—how simple-hearted—how is his eye ever fixed on the one great object of his mission—how totally absent are all self-regard, all visions of ambition, all pretensions to holiness and eminence! To testify to Christ is all his aim, and from that nothing diverts him.

II. Another point in the Baptist's character was his "bold rebuking of vice." We have this exemplified in the strong and fervid exhortations he administered to the various classes of persons who came to his baptism. But it reaches its highest point in his behaviour towards the unprincipled and licentious Herod Antipas. In our witnessing for Christ we must not shrink from this, one of its most imperative, as it is one of its least palatable duties. By the fearless testimony of Christian men almost all the improvements in society and opinions among us have been brought about.

III. The last scene in the Baptist's life stands unsurpassed in history, both for what it does relate and what it does not relate. It furnishes us, on the one hand, with the saddest recorded triumph of vanity and depravity over integrity and godliness. And the saint of God—he is utterly worthless in the matter; his life is recklessly sacrificed to the cruelty and caprice of an adulteress. But turn to the other side—to that which is not recorded, but left for us to infer. Who are they for whom our hearts bleed in this sad history? Who lie the deepest in misery after the catastrophe—the oppressed or the oppressors, the martyr or the tyrant and his court? Hence let us learn to measure all such incidents in the history of the world, and to cast in our lot accordingly.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v., p. 32

NATURE and Circumstances.

Jesus was telling His disciples that the true greatness of human life must come by following Him. It was inevitable, then, that men should ask, "How is it about those great men who are not His followers; those great men who have gone before Him; those great men who are wholly outside of His influence—are they not truly great? And if they are, what has become of His saying that true greatness lies only in Him, and in the kingdom of God to which He is so earnestly summoning us?

I. This question belongs not to the things of Christ, nor to religious things alone. All life suggests it, for in all life there are these two ways of estimating the probable value of men: one by the direct perception of their characters; the other by the examination of the institutions to which they belong, the privileges which they enjoy. Think of the schoolboy who is just graduating from one of our public schools, and of Socrates, who died more than two thousand years ago in Greece. The schoolboy represents the privileged condition which is the result of centuries of civilization. He cannot help knowing things which were utterly out of the power of the ancient philosopher. The philosopher is among the very greatest of historic men; but the least of modern men has that which he, with all his greatness, could not have.

II. Here, then, we see the two elements: there is the greatness of nature, and there is the greatness of circumstances. Christ recognizes the two elements of personal greatness and of lofty condition, and He seems almost to suggest another truth, which

is at any rate familiar to our experience of life, which is that personal power which has been manifest in some lower region of life seems sometimes to be temporarily lost and dimmed with the advance of the person who possesses it into a higher condition.

"You must be born again," the Master said to Nicodemus. Nicodemus wanted Christ to meet him in a lower world, a world of moral precepts and Hebrew traditions, where the Pharisee was thoroughly at home. But Christ said, "No, there is a higher world; you must go up there; you must enter into that; you must have a new birth, and live in a new life—in a life where God is loved and known and trusted and communed with. He who is least in that kingdom, he who has in any degree begun to live that higher kind of life, has something which the best and noblest soul in the inferior life has not, is greater than the greatest who is not in the kingdom."

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons in English Churches*, p. 200.

**Chap. xi., ver. 11.—"Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."**

I. THESE words, as they were spoken, need very little explanation. We can well understand how they rose to the lips of our Lord as He looked back upon the past history of His race, and forward to the larger Church which He came to found. He came to set before men a new ideal, another standard, a higher rule of life, to make a new revelation of God to man; but not for this only. He came to plant a leaven in the world, that must spread and germinate and affect the world, or perish; and therefore, as He looked back on that earlier Church which had been laid step by step to the eve of this era, and forward to the new power and the new life which His own work was to bring alike to the spirit of the individual and the framework of society, He might well say that the humblest of those who were admitted into that new kingdom would enjoy greater privileges, stand on a higher vantage-ground, than even he who, like Moses, had led his race to the verge of the promised land, but had failed to enter.

II. The text may save us from refusing to honour all that justly claims our homage; it may guard us against doing violence to the Christian conscience by accepting a lower or un-Christian standard, by reverencing that which has no claim to reverence. It may remind us that we need not prostrate ourselves in unmanly hero-worship before the mingled clay and gold of

mere human greatness; but that we may not refuse to acknowledge and to honour all that is high, all that is good, see it where we may. We cannot admire too fully or too cordially whatever in any age or on any scene is truly great, is truly noble; but we may still prize above all gifts for ourselves and for others the full surrender of the heart to God, the admission into the number of those who seek His voice and do His bidding, and are taught of Him, led by Him, and owned by Him. Verily, I say unto you, we may hear within our hearts that among those born of women there is none greater than this or that hero of this age or of another; yet "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

DEAN BRADLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 289.

REFERENCES: xi. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 89; S. Macnaughten, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 172; J. Brierley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 53.

Chap. xi., ver. 12 (with Luke xvi., ver. 16).—"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." "The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

THE Virtue of Violence.

We shall try to draw the character of the βιαστής, or man of violence, as Christ here introduces him, in two or three of his relations to the kingdom of grace.

I. The "royal" life, or it would not be such, is a life, in part, of renunciation. It has to make sacrifices. The violent man, determined to take the kingdom by force, goes to war with his sins, makes no excuse for them, never pretends to say that they are venial, or to say that they are natural. He must be rid of them, and he knows it, or he cannot enter heaven. Therefore he brings the fire and sword of the new kingdom into their encampments and into their fastnesses, burns and slays without mercy, as though they were his enemies, counts nothing worth keeping if it involves truce, treaty, or compromise with them.

II. Every one knows, most men have felt, at some period of their lives, that the royal life is not easy in what it demands of the reason. In the most difficult, most delicate, most critical matter of believing there is a timidity which is no prudence, and there is a vehemence which is no presumption. The man of violence must have his answer; and when he has it he will embrace, he will avow, he will live it. This one thing I do: I follow after till I know, and then I follow after till I attain.

III. The life into which man finds entrance through faith

is a life of two chief activities: there is an activity Godward and there is an activity manward. The one is devotion, the other is work. There is a force necessary, as well as a sweetness, to the perfection of the Christian character. All the great works have been done by it. There has always been an outspokenness, an independence, a willingness to stand alone, to go forth without the gate and the camp of the conventional and the traditional, in the men who have told upon their times, in the men who have made history, in the men who have set forward on its march the cause of good. This is the violence of which the text tells in its positive activity.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Cambridge Review*, May 5th, 1886.

I. LET us look in a large way at this important truth. Everything great on earth has to be achieved by long, earnest, persistent toil. If you seek to become master of any art, any literature, any science, any accomplishment, you do not sit down and say, "God is the Giver of all good, and I shall not be so arrogant as to strive for that which He alone can bestow." You know very well it can only be had by meeting every obstacle and conquering it. The very value of a thing is estimated often by the straining endeavour, the unconquerable zeal, and the ceaseless labour which are requisite to its attainment. One might go through the whole range of human experience and culture, and everywhere the kingdom that you want to become master of has been taken by force. The door is opened to the persistent knocking. The bread is given to the unwearied demand. The treasure is found by the one who has been seeking.

II. Now we come to the highest life of all, to the culture of that part of our nature which transcends all else. Is it not this principle which pervades all the physical and mental world, and which is to be found in the grander life of the immortal soul? Surely it is, and we ignore the teaching of Christ and His apostles if we regard Christ's religion as merely a means by which we are to be saved from all trouble and responsibility about the future. Side by side with the fullest statements of God's free grace, what do we find in the life and writings of St. Paul? All through those Epistles which are so full of the Gospel of the grace of God, and where Christ and Him crucified is the central fact of the Christian faith, the apostle, in words which thrill with the living power of deep personal experience, speaks of the Christian life as a ceaseless, protracted, fearful

struggle. He exhausts things sacred and profane to find imagery to depict and to impress this truth. The Christian life is a race for which no previous preparation is too careful, in which every nerve is to be strained, and in which all our force is to be concentrated, that we may "obtain the prize." It is not a mere isolated battle, but a fierce, protracted warfare, for which is provided alike offensive and defensive armour, and into which he dare not enter unless completely equipped. Such was St. Paul's conception of the Christian life; such, he tells us, was his experience of what it was "to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

T. T. SHORE, *Some Difficulties of Belief*, p. 165.

REFERENCES: xi. 12.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 238; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,905; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 252; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 79; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 8; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 252; D. Rhys Jenkins, *The Eternal Life*, p. 318. xi. 12, 13.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 197. xi. 14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., pp. 337, 505. xi. 14-17.—*Ibid.*, p. 470; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 81. xi. 15.—J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 184; S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 159. xi. 16, 17.—S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 33.

### Chap. xi., vers. 16-19.

THE Baptist and Christ.

I. When John appeared to Israel, and made his voice heard from the wilderness, the stern reality of such a life struck all imaginations; the hope he held out of a teacher who should subdue all hearts, and lift off the weight of sin, his own short, well-defined teaching kindled men with the hope of peace, and all classes streamed into the desert to hear his tale. Only a few remained; the rest streamed back again, untouched or angry. But all the same, they could not get rid of the religious impulse in their heart. The leaven of the time still worked, and when they got back to their homes in Jerusalem they were charmed to hear of a more liberal teacher than John. (1) The religion of the Baptist had been too hard for them, because of its stern morality. It demanded outward purity—domestic, social, political, and mercantile purity. We shall be better off with Christ, they thought. "He will not be so hard on us." Alas! they found themselves worse off than before. It was bad enough to hear that the whole of the outward life had to be reformed; it was ten times worse to hear that the inward life had to be reformed. (2) The religion of the Baptist had been too hard on them, because of its demand for self-sacrifice.

And, lo! Christ was ten times more severe on this point than John. To relieve their conscience they turned to abuse and vilify Him who had shown them a vision they could not bear. They were piped unto, and they had not danced.

II. Another class of men turned from the Baptist to look at the religion of Christ. These were the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees. John had treated them with no gentle terms. Serpents, generation of vipers—these were the soft words he used. No doubt there were sleek hyprocrites and bigots among them, and the bitter words were well deserved. But there must have been others who were really moral men among them, and who strove to follow righteousness. So far as the religious pride and persecuting and exclusive spirit was concerned, they were not much better than the hypocrites. The Pharisees were disappointed in Christ. No sharper or more indignant language was ever used by man against other men than the words with which Christ denounced them—words which cost Him His life, and which He knew would do so. He would have nothing to do with them unless they came to Him humbly, and confessed themselves sinners. Not among their ranks, but among unlearned fishermen and villagers, He chose His special followers; He dined with the publicans, even at one of their houses He admitted the sinful women to salvation. Let the Pharisees say what they will, "wisdom is justified of her children."

S. A. BROOKE, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 19.

REFERENCES: xi. 16-19.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, Nos. 2,248, 2,251; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 75; G. Salmon, *Sermons Preached in Trinity College, Dublin*, p. 249; *Pulpit Parables*, p. 207. xi. 16-20.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 257. xi. 16-29.—R. C. Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 153.

**Chap. xi., ver. 19.—"The Son of man came eating and drinking."**

I. THE idea of the essential badness of pleasure has been very commonly held and advocated by the propounders of ethical and religious systems. The religions of the Hindus and the Buddhists aim at the gradual suppression of the body, and the entire eradication of desire. Like many other views which find no warrant in the Christianity of Christ, this idea has had a considerable influence upon the Christianity of Christendom.

II. Asceticism in its extreme form, in which it is synonymous with the worship of pain, will scarcely bear a moment's examination. The supposition that God takes delight in agony is the foulest of all conceivable blasphemies. Asceticism, how-

ever, often takes a somewhat different form. Many persons seem to think that they ought by rights to care for nothing but heaven. They seem to think, as they lavish their affections upon those who are dear to them, that God is watching them with an angry, greedy jealousy, and will never be satisfied till He has concentrated the whole wealth of their love upon Himself.

III. Now this is not the kind of self-denial which Christ requires from us. Serious and earnest as the Saviour was, no one can say that He was a harsh or gloomy ascetic. Think of Him at the marriage festival. Think of His friendly visits to the family at Bethany. He never refused anything agreeable, except when it would have hindered Him in the accomplishment of His Father's work. "I pray not," said our Lord, "that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." "The Son of man came eating and drinking." Ay, the very Man of Sorrows refused to join in the irrational worship of pain.

A. W. MOMERIE, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 123.

REFERENCES: xi. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 556; J. W. Lance, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 129; F. W. Farrar, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 46; F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 182. xi. 20.—J. Tulloch, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 25. xi. 20, 21.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 233. xi. 20-24.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 387; R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 514; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 173. xi. 21, 22.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 275.

Chap. xi., ver. 23.—"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

I. CONSIDER first what is implied by the denunciation of Capernaum as exalted unto heaven. The Bible finds man in a garden, it leaves him in a city. We cannot but think that it is here intimated to us that the highest kind of life is social life; that man, in the noblest development of his gifts, is not a creature meant to live in any degree by or for himself, but to dwell in close contact with his brethren, in a condition in which both his happiness and his sanctification are to be increased by, and to find scope in, mutual sympathy and mutual subjection. We take it, therefore, to be a very shallow view of things which considers a great town as a great evil, and a town life in its nature inferior to a country life in moral and religious excellence.

But whilst this is so, we may not shut our eyes to the fact that city life has temptations peculiar to itself. Our Lord speaks of Capernaum as exalted to heaven; and it is this precise self-exaltation which is the snare of every man who is one of a great community. The concourse of men together has a tendency to put God at a distance. Men come gradually to trust to themselves, to do without God. Now it is this self-exaltation, which grows up so gradually and so naturally in great cities, which Christ in the text threatens with the doom of being cast down. And we thus arrive at a lesson profitable for all, that if we would lead a life safe from the casting down of shame and care, we must keep steadily before us, as a rule and motive, the thought of an ever-present, personal God.

II. But it is not only the being independent of God which our Lord charges upon Capernaum. He speaks of it as being in an especial degree insensible to His own wonder-working power. And here, again, Christ appears to us to lay bare another fault to which large and flourishing communities are peculiarly liable, namely, insensibility to religious impressions. There are various ways in which this insensibility shows itself. Perhaps, amongst ourselves, it is chiefly proved by the small proportion of the population who attend the public services or partake of the Lord's supper. The root of the neglect is what Christ mentions in the text, an insensibility to all religious impressions, a half disbelief in any real operations of God amongst us. It is the spirit of independence and insensibility-whose final casting down our Lord foretells.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 135.

REFERENCE: xi. 23.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,510.

Chap. xi., ver. 25.—"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

I. NOTE, first, the Master's words when He thanks God that He "has hid these things from the wise and prudent." A man may have understanding and wisdom enough on certain of life's matters without having them on all. Everything must be known after its kind, and under its condition as knowledge. God is not to be inductively put together; we cannot by searching find Him out. The ultimate truth of everything is unseen, and accepted on the evidence of faith. If the world by wisdom found not God, much less can it find, or even appreciate, those

things which the Master affirmed to be hid from the wise and understanding. The Gospel of God in His Anointed reconciling the world to Himself, while it is nearer in revelation—for in it God is made manifest—than is the thought of the existence of God, is the remoter of the two to speculation and reason. The formalist in thought will reject either it or its form. The Sadducee will be accompanied by the Pharisee in rejecting its claim.

II. He hath revealed these things unto babes. Ignorance was not the feature which the Master seized upon when He used this word "babes." A man who knows little may have this knowledge imparted to him; these things were revealed to Galilean fishermen, and are still being unveiled to the wondering eyes of the childlike. And they may be all made known to the man who knows much. A man may have the keen scrutiny of Faraday, and like that great and unsophisticated man, pray to God as his Father, and love Christ as his Revealer; or, as Pascal, be the abstruse reasoner, and the acute mathematician, and still hold his best thoughts in devout consecration to God. The thing is to conserve spiritual impressibility; if this be done, we may know much of the world and much of Him whose ways are past our finding out.

III. No other condition of receiving spiritual truth than that of being babes is universally possible. It is in our obedience that we realize our adoption, and become free to cry, "Abba, Father." Time is meaningless without these hidden and revealed things, and eternity is very cold and very dark to look to. But with these every day has in it some lasting thing, and by these the unseen is made substantial and real.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 191.

THE Educating Power of Strong Impressions.

I. The character of the child is wanted as the provisionary state, favourable for getting from the superior mind all that it can give. It does this all the better for its own passiveness and childlike properties; it takes in all the more intensely a living fund of thought from a master, which ultimately turns to the disciple's own strength and his advantage as a man of power. What he needs for this is an extraordinary capacity of impress; but an extraordinary capacity of impress from a superior makes a child, for the time, in tone and character.

II. This was the case with the Apostles. They first appear as children in Scripture, being acted upon, receiving an impress, drawing into their hearts a type and pattern. And they have

what is a characteristic of children, namely, an extraordinary happiness. They are wholly relieved from the care and responsibility of the sublime mission; that burden is taken off them. He bears it all who is able to bear the whole of it. This very happiness, this freedom and absence of strain upon them, enabled them all the more to take in the fresh ideas which were flowing in from our Lord's discourse and example. All the powers of the fresh opening of life were devoted to the new springtide of truth.

III. Thus they came out men of formed and strong character, when the Apostles were all at once, by the departure of our Lord, thrown back upon themselves, and upon the supernatural guidance of the invisible Spirit; when, upon our Lord's ascension, they were obliged to meet all the difficulties and face the dangers of the Gospel cause. The Apostles became men, able to see their way amidst obstacles, to guide the movement, to encourage the weak, and to give strength to the growing cause. This was the maturity of manhood, but it was the fruit of a previous childhood which had used to its utmost extent the power which childhood has of following a type, submitting to a superior influence, and receiving, in fact, education.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 330.

I. THE small success and efficacy of the preached Gospel upon multitudes who hear it is a subject of wonder and grief to the ministers and people of God. It was so to our Lord Jesus, considered as a Preacher and Messenger; and they, so far as they have received His Spirit, judge and act as He did. Those who have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious have had such a powerful experience in their souls of the necessity and value of the Gospel that in their first warmth, and till painful experience has convinced them of the contrary, they can hardly think it possible that sinners should stand out against its evidence.

II. The best relief against those discouragements we meet with from men is to raise our thoughts to God and heaven. For this the Lord Jesus is our precedent here. He said, "I thank Thee, O Father." The word signifies to confess, to promise, to consent, and to praise. As if it had been said, "I glorify Thy wisdom in this respect. I acknowledge and declare it is Thy will, and I express My own consent and approbation." It is needful for our comfort to be well established in the truth suggested in the text, that the Lord hath provided for the accomplishment of our purposes, and that His counsels shall

surely stand. From this doctrine we may infer: (1) That where the faithful labours and endeavours of ministers and others to promote the knowledge of grace and the practice of holiness fail of success, yet they shall be accepted. (2) Faithful endeavours in the service of the Gospel shall not wholly fail. (3) The Divine sovereignty is the best thought we can retreat to for composing and strengthening our minds under the difficulties, discouragements, and disappointments which attend the publication of the Gospel. If God appoints and overrules all according to the purpose of His own will, we have sufficient security both for the present and future. (1) For the present, we may firmly expect what Scripture and reason concur to assure us, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. (2) For the future, He has appointed a day when He will make it appear that He *has done* right. What we shall then see it is now our duty and our comfort assuredly to believe.

J. NEWTON, *Church of England Pulpit*, July 29th, 1876.

**Chap. xi., vers. 25, 26.**

WHY God reveals to babes. The babe is the representative of the receptive spirit. Its characteristic is trust, openness to impression, and freedom from prejudice. Childlike men may be powerful in intellect and capable of a bold initiative quite as much as those of a contrary character, but they possess, above all, the capacity of surrendering themselves to an influence outside of them, and letting it work its effects upon them unhindered by theory or questioning.

I. To reveal to babes harmonizes with God's character as a Father, and illustrates it. "Babe" is the counterpart to "Father;" "wise and understanding" has no such relation. A father's heart is not attracted to the brilliance or power in his family, but to the want. The open, clinging heart appeals to him. This is the advantage of the babe over the wise and understanding—he recognizes and claims relationship to God, and receives.

II. It glorifies God as Lord of heaven and earth to reveal to babes. Had God shown a preference for the elevated, had He touched mainly the hill-tops, what an impoverishing of the world it would have been! How the whole conception of God would have been lowered by the absence of lowliness! But how near God comes; how dear He is to us by His frequent close relationship to the poor and lowly! We are drawn to the mighty God who is drawn to the babes. This is the greatness that

cheers us, and binds us to God. This makes us rich and great.

III. By revealing to babes the Father and Lord of heaven and earth manifests the supremacy of the moral element. When God passes by the soaring imagination, the lofty intellect, the keen understanding, and puts His main blessing into the lowly heart and open spirit, when He comes down to the very lowest form of the moral and spiritual—the mere sense of want, the mere hunger for better things—and gives infinite wealth to that, what a rebuke He conveys to pride of intellect! what honour. He confers upon plain heart and conscience!

IV. It glorifies God as Father and Lord of heaven and earth to reveal to babes, for it shows His desire to reveal as much as possible, and to as many as possible.

V. The appointment of a personal Saviour glorifies God as Father and Lord of heaven and earth, and is peculiarly adapted to babes.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons preached in Ibrox*, p. 1.

NOTE—I. the apparent paradox involved in these words, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (1) All revelation is to some extent a concealment. The veil is ever being drawn aside, but it is never taken away. Wherever we take our stand, our own shadow will fall on the glorious countenance. (2) The special revelation which God has made to some individuals is the very process by which He has concealed Himself from others. If God's revelation has been made to certain nations, and if He is educating our race by conferring special and peculiar functions on different nations of men, then the process has been one of election on the grand scale, and He whose love has revealed itself to some has concealed itself from others. (3) The revelation, though made, needed special eyes, ears, minds, to receive it.

II. The Redeemer's judgment and gratitude concerning it. (1) He attributes the arrangement to the universal Lord. The great fact and apparent paradox is a Divine arrangement, not an unfortunate accident. (2) The Saviour acquiesces in this arrangement, not simply as an act of universal sovereignty, but as most merciful and good, as the Father's good pleasure. (3) Christ deliberately thanks God that it is so. Instead of being narrow or restricted in its range, the principle of discrimination was the widest and noblest that can be conceived. The babes

may never become wise and prudent, but the greatest mind may and can humble itself, and become as a little child. Hence, this is the noblest and broadest offer of mercy.

H. R. REYNOLDS, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 67.

I. "THOU hast hid *these things*." What things? The facts that the Apostles had cast out devils, that they had healed the sick, that they had given antidotes for poison? Not at all. You must follow the inward thought of the Saviour. Here was the power of unlearned, untaught men. They were not equipped for speaking or for acting before the public, and yet there was a secret hidden power in their souls which was more than a match for the temple, and the synagogue, and the forum. It was not continuous at first, but it became so. The whole drift of the New Testament is to create in men the Divine element, or to let it loose if it be captive, or to develop it if it be yet in the germ. The hidden kingdom of the soul, this depth which no man can reveal in language, recognized by the Lord Jesus Christ, was the state into which the Apostles came, and is the state into which a great many have entered in every age and throughout the world.

II. Faith, hope, and love are the three things which the Apostle says will survive time and the changes of death. He declares that all our intellectual states are merely approximations. Knowledge, comprehensive with its relativities, subject to the light and to the disclosures of a new condition—these shall pass away. When the Apostle says that faith, hope, and love survive, can any man out of these three words give any conception of that vast kingdom which shall come by these disclosures, and combinations, and developments? No man can do it. And yet it is the power of this inward, hidden soul-life which is revealed to these babes, these unwashed fishermen, these uneducated peasants.

III. This hidden life of the soul is the most powerful life. It gives a man courage. It imparts light and gladness. It dissipates fear. It takes away doubt. He is luminous that dwells in the secret of God.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 227; see also *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 25.

Chap. xi., vers. 25-30.

I. THE word which our English version renders "I thank Thee" is in reality of more extended meaning. It means something of this kind, "I confess, I acknowledge, Thy great

wisdom." There was something in the dispensation of God's providence, of which our Saviour speaks, which at once commended itself to His holy mind as wise and good; not merely something in which He saw the demonstration of God's power, which proved God's omnipotence, but rather that which equally proved His mercy, His goodness, His wisdom.

II. What does our Lord mean by *wise* and *prudent?* These are words capable of a good sense. It is obvious that the text cannot mean that God has hidden the Gospel from all those who are endued with powerful minds, or who are learned in such things as pertain to this world. If it be said that the wisdom and prudence of this world can never reveal God to us, and can never be a substitute for that revelation which God has been pleased to make to us in Jesus Christ, this is indeed most true, and contains the meaning of the words of the text; for the just appreciation of the value of the Gospel of Jesus Christ requires something for which no talent, no learning, or wisdom or prudence, can be any substitute, any more than seeing can be hearing, or hearing can be smelling. And if the wise and the prudent very often miss the message of the Gospel, this is probably the point at which they go wrong; they imagine that they have in their own wisdom and prudence the guide to all they want to know; but it is not by his wisdom or his prudence that man holds communion with God; it is not by reasoning that he learns his true relation to God; for what is that true relation? It is that relation in which a man stands by *sin*, the relation of a lost sheep, wandering and straying, to a shepherd willing to lead it back again Here, then, we see how it is that the Gospel, which the wise and prudent despise, may be accepted by babes—that is, by the poorest, the weakest, the simplest, the most ignorant.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 98.

THIS text teaches two lessons—

I. How the Lord judges results of His ministry which to our eyes appear strange. We are surprised to find that the very men who seem best fitted to understand the Lord remain in opposition to Him. How could the people understand the Lord? That was the business of the cultured, of the scribes and Pharisees. Further, who were better qualified to advance the work of the Lord than the scribes, the leaders of the people? The Lord is less surprised than we are at this issue of His work. He sees in it a Divine arrangement of His heavenly Father; He

knows how faith arises in men; He knows that no man cometh unto the Father save through the Son, and that no man cometh to the Son save through the Father. Because He knows this, He sees in the fact that the truth of His salvation has been revealed to babes a sacred and Divine appointment, and He welcomes this appointment with thankfulness and praise. We feel that the words of the text are no mere resignation to a Divine appointment which He fails to understand. Through the meek resignation we catch a note of inward joy. St. Luke tells us that Jesus rejoiced in spirit when He spoke these words. It is hard for the wise man to attach himself closely to Christ. The scribes were prepared for a Messiah, but not for such a Messiah as this. It was not easy for them to accept a manifestation which was opposed to all their previous conceptions. The Lord had an easier task in dealing with the babes. He could be best understood by those who brought no preconceptions with them. His image was the first to be stamped upon their souls. Enlightened by His teaching, the witness of the babes was other and far nobler than that of cultured men and scholars.

II. The comprehension of this fact incites our Lord to a special kind of activity: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." This is what the Lord says to the wise and prudent as well as to the babes. He does not address them as wise and prudent, but as weary ones, and the refreshment He offers depends on one condition only, we must take His yoke upon us. Who would refuse to take it, since He says, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light"?

R. ROTHE, *Predigten*, p. 161.

REFERENCE: xi. 25.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 31. xi. 25, 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 394. xi. 25-30.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., pp. 215, 249, 348; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 183; G. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 136; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 87; J. J. S. Perowne, *Expository Outlines of Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 23.

Chap. xi., ver. 26.—"Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

I. THERE are some occasions of life and times of perplexing difficulty and sorrow when the mind, which was at first paralyzed, by degrees awakes and recovers itself to see reasons—merciful, satisfying reasons—why God did these things. That is one of the paths which lead out of the lower places up

to a purer atmosphere, to peace and safety. But there is a much higher and more blessed state than that. It is when, with all your thinking, you can see no explanatory reason, nor trace one justifying cause whatsoever, in the whole circumstances of the case. Then at such a time as that to bend, to submit and believe, as much as when the mind had some clues to help it and rays to guide it—that is faith indeed, and will have its reward. "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

II. To cherish such a feeling in our hearts our Lord's words give us two suggestions—one implied, and one expressed. (1) Take right views of the Fatherly character of God. There are no sins we ever commit greater than the sin of not treating God as a Father. (2) We often speak of certain great principles—principles of justice, reason, love, fitness—and we are offended if ever we see or hear anything which does not square with these great fundamental truths. But have these truths no foundation under them? Assuredly the mind of God must be the first seat of all—of all that is true and all that is right. These great principles make the mind of God; they come from the mind of God. Take that thought also with you down the labyrinth. Nothing could have happened to you unless it had first been in the mind of God. He knows the end from the beginning. To that vast intelligence there are thousands of reasons present of which you cannot read one. The unfoldings of another world will solve the problems here, and justify God in His moral government.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 60.

**Chap. xi., ver. 27.—"All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."**

I. WE can know Christ, and yet we cannot. It seems a strange contradiction to say so, yet it is a contradiction which applies to a great many even of created things. We know them, and we know them not. We know how they act; we have seen, or can image to ourselves a notion of them, but what they are in their very nature we know not. So it is with the sun in the heavens: we have all felt his warmth, and seen his brightness; we know how he ripens the fruits of the earth, and makes the world such as we can live in; yet what he is in himself, of what made, or how—that we know not, and probably cannot know. And so it

is much more with Him by whom the sun was made. His goodness we know, and His power; His love and mercy we have felt; and even of His very person, as it pleased Him to become flesh, and to dwell among us, we can readily conceive. But what He is in Himself—the Eternal, the Incomprehensible—that we cannot know. None but the Godhead knows what the Godhead is; none knoweth the Son, save the Father; none knoweth the Father, save the Son; none knoweth the things of God, save the Spirit of God.

II. In what sense is it true that none knoweth the Father, save he to whom the Son will reveal Him? or, in other words, what is the knowledge of the Father which we, as Christians, have gained? When I put myself in thought, even for a moment, out of the light of Christ's Gospel,—when I fancy myself to be as one to whom the Son has not revealed the Father,—it seems to heighten my sense of the happiness which it is to have been taught of Christ. For consider what it is to be told that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In these few words there is contained all we need. Truly may we say that we know the Father, when Christ has revealed to us thus much of His infinite love and holiness.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 29.

REFERENCES: xi. 27.—B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 205 xi. 27, 28.—Spurgeon, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 20.

Chap. xi., ver. 28.—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I. RESTLESSNESS. (1) We have all known the misery of restlessness in its physical, its bodily working. (2) There is a restlessness of mere suspense. (3) There is a suspense and a restlessness accompanying doubt, more trying still. (4) There is the restlessness of sin. (5) There is the restlessness of the heart itself.

II. The restless are all to whom Christ has not yet given His rest. To these He here addresses Himself. For He, seeing the end from the beginning, sees that the end of these things is death. In Him human restlessness finds sweet repose—in Him, in whose hands are accident and circumstance, chance and change. They that are in Him fear nothing. They will not be afraid of any evil tidings. In Him they who even doubt about all else find their feet upon the rock. Receiving Him into the

ship, they are immediately at the land whither they go. He sends them strength, as their day, to do and to forbear, to dare and to endure. In Him the tempter "has nothing;" the souls that are in His hands no torment and no temptation can touch. In Him they find that spring and fountain of perfect beauty and absolute love of which no earthly loved one can have more, at the best, than the image and the reflection. There they cling to Him, and will not forsake Him, because they have found once, and because they find day by day, His words verified, "Come unto Me, thou that art weary and heavy laden, and I will give thee rest." **C. J. Vaughan**, *Temple Sermons*, p. 123.

There was an old philosopher, long ago, who summed up his experience of man's life and toils and cares by saying that "the end of work is to enjoy rest." And truly there is no pleasanter word or thing. We come to feel that at last. There are days when the young heart pants for larger excitement; when the strong arm is eager for earnest toil; when we are ambitious, and would fain do something which might be the talk of men. But the sobering years go forward. We grow wearied in the greatness of the way. We understand the Psalmist's vague aspiration, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." Now, when we would find true rest for our souls we can find it only in Christ. He can give rest. He does give rest. When we think what are the main sources of the soul's unrest, we shall see that Christ, even in this life, is ready to deliver His people from them.

I. The burden of sin. If we saw things rightly, and as they really are, we should feel that of all the burdens which can oppress us in this world, this is the weightiest; and when the Holy Spirit "convinces us of our sin and misery," what does that mean but just making the soul see what an overwhelming weight our sins, and the woe that follows on them, make up together, and how inexpressible is our need that the great Sin-bearer should take that load away?

II. The fear and the actual endurance of the ills, the bereavements, the losses, the disappointments that compass our path in this life. Those who know not our Christian consolation have solemnly said that the pains of life outweigh its satisfactions. Now Christ has changed all that, changed it utterly. It is not merely that Christ sends the Holy Spirit to sanctify all sorrows into means of grace. To a certain extent Christ gives His own, even in this world, rest from worldly cares.

III. The eager, anxious pursuit of those things to which worldly persons give their whole heart—worldly gain and good, wealth, eminence, and distinction. Is it not true that, even here, Christ gives His people rest? The fear of earthly chances and changes He takes away. The unrest of ambition He lifts above. Often burdened as we are, often disquieted as we are, we can see that the fault does not lie with our Saviour. The fault lies in our own lack of faith to fully trust Him, if He has not given us rest.

A. K. H. B., *The Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 3rd series, p. 203.

REST in Christ the true Communion of Saints.

I. The saying of our Lord in the text is one of those distinctive sayings of Christianity that have life and growth, and while appreciable by the little child in a sense which he can appropriate and live by, can never be exhausted by the most Christlike of men. The words were addressed at first to the unlettered peasants of Galilee, to those who were on the threshold of their new life as disciples. The Saviour does not mention from what burdens He called men to be delivered. He says nothing of hell, or even of sin. Nor of what nature the rest was to be did He make clear. The Greek equivalent of the word He used is *ἀνάπαυσις*, merely *cessation*. And each of His hearers would receive His words as He was able to receive them. But they would not listen long to the new Teacher without finding new anxieties stirring in their breast, new yearnings waking into life, and a desire for a rest they had never sought for before—a respite, not from sorrow, or poverty, or oppression, but from their own wayward fancies and erring wills—a rest for their souls.

II. And as they accepted the call to come to Him which the Master offered them they went on to learn new facts as to rest and the opposite of rest. The word Christ used was a word signifying a negative gift—"cessation" from labour and anxiety. But they were to learn that it implied something else, which no negative gift can supply. The body is rested in the most effectual manner, and bodily strength regained, by quiet and absolute inaction. The mind that has been wrought upon by hard study or by anxiety is best relieved by amusement or change. But if the spirit of immortal man is to find rest, it cannot be in lying inactive. The true rest of the soul must be in activity, not in vacuity. If it has hitherto worn the yoke of the world,

there is no rest in only throwing off that yoke. It needs some other yoke in its stead. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me," etc. Here is one of the glorious paradoxes of the Gospel. The true deliverance from burdens is in taking on us a yoke. Rest is the reward of faith. If we have found something in which we can implicitly trust, we have found also that in which we can rest.

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 39.

WHEN we think of this invitation we must think of human burdens of every kind. Weariness of body and mind, of soul and spirit, must alike be taken into account. There is nothing that we are able to feel which He will not relieve, if we come to Him. And He promises this relief to burdens, not only of every kind, but also of every degree. *All* that are weary and heavy laden.

I. But where is the reality of this burden and the pressure of this weariness found? Are not men living and passing on around us contented and gay-hearted, without Christ, knowing Him not, loving Him not, caring nothing for Him? These surely are not weary; these feel no burden. These He invites in vain, for they want Him not. But are we so sure of this? They are spending but a false and artificial life, after all; they are burdened with the thought of its real condition, burdened with the fear of death, burdened with every event of God's providence as it occurs. These also are among the weary and heavy laden, and to them Jesus of Nazareth repeats His invitation in every one of the means of grace, every dispensation of His world-ruling providence.

II. Let us advance another step. You feel the burden. You have learned, at least, to see that ignorance is not bliss in matters of life and death. You do look on the past, and see it like a dark wave, mountain high, coming on your frail bark to overwhelm it. You do look on the future, as much as you dare; you see in it matter for desperation, rather than for hope. Such a state is just the most critical one in which any man can be placed. If the penitent listens to the suggestions of the tempter, the balance turns for death; the brimming pool, which has paused and rippled with the breath of the Spirit towards the bright light of God's morning, bursts at once over the dark hillside, and plunges downward into the gloom. But come to Christ when he will or when he can—whether the awakening be an easy one, from the lighter slumber of youth's thoughtless-

ness; or a hard and painful one, from the deep and deadly sleep of years—the Lord's promise to the sinner is the same: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 100.

IN this text Christ has made two classes out of those to whom He speaks—those that labour, and those that are heavy laden. Both are sufferers; but the one class is composed of the active, and the other of the passive sufferers—a description which exactly answers to the reality of daily life. We are all under active or passive discipline.

I. Look at the offered gift. It is clear that there are two ways in which God might deal with and relieve the mind that labours and is heavy laden. He might remove the cause, and so exempt the man from its effects; or He might leave the evil, but impart something which would entirely neutralize it. Of these two methods, the first is the obvious one, and therefore we call that man's way,—man is always trying to remove evil. The second is much deeper and much better, and therefore it is God's way.

II. A believer's rest is threefold. (1) First there comes the rest of a sense of pardon. "We which believe have entered into rest." We "cease from our own works, as God did from His." The chief cause of the restlessness of the world is that it has not yet rested in God. (2) Sin, after it is pardoned, struggles, and often prevails; and it cannot be quite rest to a Christian so long as what he hates gets such a mastery over him. Therefore he wants a rest like that rest to Israel, when they settled down in Canaan,—their enemies not all destroyed, but all conquered and held down. So it comes to pass. The higher power of the new nature in the man gradually prevails over the old inhabitants. They are there, but they are kept under. Holiness increases, and holiness is rest. The heart becomes more one, the counter-tides are not so violent, the aim of the man is single, the whole man is gathered up to a point, and that is rest. That is the rest of santification. (3) Far on, however, after this, and unto the very gate of heaven, sin lives, we feel it lives, but it does not reign. It is not perfect rest; that rest remaineth. But it is coming, it is very near—perfect rest, when we shall rest from the presence of sin. Sin will be nothing but a memory, a memory of a forgiven thing, and every memory will exalt Him. That will be the rest of glory.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 126.

### Chap. xi., ver. 28.—"Ye that . . . are heavy laden."

I. Sin always imposes burdens upon the sinner.

II. The burdens of the sinner are a continual appeal to the affection and power of Jesus Christ.

III. Jesus Christ, in offering rest to burdened souls, asserted His claim to be regarded as God.

IV. A double action is indicated in the offer. *Come—give.* Come with your burdens, and in the very act of coming the burden will be taken away.

R. A. Bertram, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 11.

References: xi. 28.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 39; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,691; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 351; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 182; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 530; vol. x., p. 268; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 423; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 18; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, p. 18; B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 229; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 224; Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 45; E. V. Hall, *Sermons in Worcester Cathedral*, p. 50; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. ii., p. 11.

### Chap. xi., vers. 28, 29.

One does not know whether tenderness or majesty is predominant in these wonderful words—a Divine penetration into man's true condition, and a Divine pity, are expressed in them. Jesus looks with clear-sighted compassion into the inmost history of all hearts, and sees the toil and the sorrow which weigh on every soul. And no less remarkable is the Divine consciousness of power to succour and to help which speaks in them.

I. Consider the twofold designation here of the persons addressed. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." The one word expresses effort and toil, the other a burden and endurance. The one speaks of the active, the other of the passive side of human misery and evil. Toil is work which is distasteful in itself, or which is beyond our faculties. Such toil, some time or other, more or less, sooner or later, is the lot of every man. All work becomes labour, and all labour, some time or other, becomes toil. Toil is a curse; work is a blessing. But all our work darkens into toil; and the invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour," reaches to the utmost verge of humanity, and includes every soul.

II. Look at the twofold invitation that is here. "Come unto Me"—"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." In these

words, which come so familiarly to most of our memories that they have almost ceased to present sharp meanings, there is not only the merciful summons to the initial act, but the description of the continual life of which that act is the introduction.

III. Look, lastly, at the twofold promise which is here. "I will *give* you rest"—"Ye shall *find* rest." There is rest in coming to Christ; the rest of a quiet conscience, which gnaws no more; the rest of a conscious friendship and union with God, in whom alone is our soul's home, harbour, and repose; the rest of fears dispelled; the rest of forgiveness received into the heart. There is rest in faith. The very act of confidence is repose. There is a further rest in obedience, and emphatically and most blessedly there is a rest in Christlikeness.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, April 1st, 1886.

REFERENCES: xi. 28, 29.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 142; W. J. Knox-Little, *Characteristics of the Christian Life*, p. 223.

### Chap. xi., vers. 28-30.

IN the little word "come" is folded up the whole morality of the sentence, the very ethics of the Gospel.

I. "Come unto Me;" wherefore the all-important question is, How are we to come? We hear the call, we kindle into fervour at the Divine promise; but what are we to do? how are we to come? Faith is the hand that toucheth the hem of our Saviour's garment; or faith is the tongue which responds to the invitation, and saith, Lord, I come; faith is that which appropriates the merits of our Lord, and secures, through His righteousness, our justification. But this is not the coming. The coming is something additional to this. We come to the Lord whenever (aware that we can only be made righteous through the sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit, and seeking for pardon and grace, for life and light) we exert ourselves to break off habits of sin; and a further step we take when saying, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner. We endeavour deliberately to form habits of good. Step by step we draw nearer and more near unto the Lord, as we advance from one degree of holiness to another.

II. Exertion on our part is implied through the whole Christian scheme. We are regenerated, renovated, sanctified, by the Spirit of Christ; but to receive that gift we must come by an endeavour to remove all those impediments to grace which His all-searching eye may detect in our moral nature, to eradicate

whatever there may be in us of evil, and to cultivate whatever of good the Holy Ghost may have already imparted to the soul.

W. F. HOOK, *Parish Sermons*, p. 294.

NOTICE—I. That Christ has what He promises to give. Rest was the boon which the wandering Jew coveted, and which every wandering man covets now, but not rest from activity. The rest which we want is the rest of being fitted for our sphere. Give us this, and we can say, "Return, my soul, unto thy rest." We can do without all our happiness if we have this repose of inward faculty, and if we can retire from the world into ourselves, and find ourselves redeemed in God, and to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. (1) We are restless because our outward condition is not such as we deem compatible with our nature and temperament. Our deepest discontent, however, is not because there is a winter without, with many storms and shrivelling winds, but because there are wrong and frailty within. Christ was at rest with His own conscience. Men found no fault with Him; He found no fault with Himself. (2) Our unrest is deepened by our suspicions, if not by our certainties, of something beyond and above our life. Christ was strangely calm as He looked up and beyond, whether to the past or to the future. He was at rest in rest, at rest in action, and at rest in death, at rest with himself and with God.

II. He can give this rest under the conditions He imposes. His conditions are comprised in coming to Him, taking His yoke, and learning of Him. They are nothing more, when divested of figure, than that men are to submit trustfully to whatever influence He has to exert on them. The highest influence which is ever experienced in life is the influence of that indefinable thing called character. The unknown thing in character is being, life, consciousness; and we come to this at last, that it is by life that our life is moved and moulded We find rest unto our souls through learning of Christ, and by being baptized into His great soul in our communion with Him He will perform the offices of a Divine friend by us, and through His friendship we enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God; and as we enter into the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," we learn how, by the elevation of our consciousness, to pardon ourselves, and to relinquish our old because we need our hands to take the new.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 211

I. To come to Christ is to approach Him in the exercise of faith, for deliverance from sin and condemnation.

II. Coming to Christ has regard to the future as well as to the past. He who comes to Christ truly comes to be Christ's. To come to Christ is not only to trust Him to deliver us from the consequences of our past transgressions; it is also, in all the future, to submit ourselves to His control and government. Christ Himself teaches this in our text, "Take My yoke upon you." From the earliest ages the yoke has been the instrument by which oxen have been subjected to man, and compelled to toil in his service; and hence it has always been the symbol of the subjection into which men are sometimes brought to their fellow-men. So that what Christ invites and commands us to do is to submit ourselves absolutely to Him.

III. Whoever comes to Christ truly comes to be made like Christ. It is our nature to imitate. Every man has some model whom He strives to resemble. Now Christ says to us, "Make Me your model; strive to be like Me; become, like Me, meek and lowly in heart."

R. A. BERTRAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 248.

REFERENCES: xi. 28-30.—S. Leathes, *Truth and Life*, p. 219; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 265; vol. xvii., No. 969; vol. xxii., No. 1,322; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 36; H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 10th series, p. 141; *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 309; vol. xii., p. 220; E. Johnson, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 264; T. M. Morris, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 309; H. Platten, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 273; A. M. Mackay, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 134; Fergus Ferguson, *Ibid.*, p. 329; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 115; G. Matheson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p. 101; C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 163.

### Chap. xi., vers. 29, 30.

I. LET us set it down as a first principle in religion that all of us must come to Christ, in some sense or other, through things naturally unpleasant to us; it may be even through bodily suffering, or it may be nothing more than the subduing of our natural infirmities and the sacrifice of our natural wishes; it may be pain greater or less, on a public stage or a private one; but till the words "yoke" and "cross" can stand for something pleasant, the bearing of our yoke and cross is something not pleasant; and though rest is promised as our reward, yet the way to rest must lie through discomfort and distress of heart.

II. If you call to mind some of the traits of that special religious character to which we are called, you will readily

understand how both it, and the discipline by which it is formed in us, are not naturally pleasant to us. That character is described in the text as meekness and lowliness; for we are told to "learn" of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. The same character is presented to us at greater length in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, in which seven notes of a Christian are given to us, in themselves of a painful and humbling character, but joyful, because they are blessed by Him.

III. Nothing short of suffering, except in rare cases, makes us what we should be—gentle instead of harsh, meek instead of violent, conceding instead of arrogant, lowly instead of proud, pure-hearted instead of sensual, sensitive of sin instead of carnal. Never fancy that the true Christian character can coalesce with the world's character, or is the world's character improved—merely a superior kind of worldly character. No, it is a new character, or, as St. Paul words it, "a new creation." There is but one cross and one character of mind formed by it, and nothing can be farther from it than those tempers and dispositions in which the greater part of men called Christians live.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 182.

REFERENCES: xi. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,105; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 84; vol. xxix., p. 30; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 37; W. Morrison, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 18; W. Gresley, *Practical Sermons*, p. 199; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. i., p. 63.

**Chap. xi., ver. 30.—"For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."**

THIS passage has in it some far-reaching things, which do not strike us on a mere cursory reading. (1) It sets before us very clearly the Saviour's constant attitude of invitation. (2) It reminds us that we become learners in Christ's school only through the process of obedience. (3) It teaches us that there are degrees of rest in the experience of the Christian disciple. Consider especially the words of the text. Christ does not mean to allege that the cross which we are to take up is not a real cross, or that the self-renunciation to which He calls us is but a nominal thing. Still less does He design to show the superiority of His religion to the systems of heathenism which so enslaved their votaries. His words are absolute, and not comparative; and therefore, admitting to the full all the tribulations and unpleasantnesses, all the sacrifices and afflictions, which his very adherence to Jesus entails upon every Christian

disciple, let us see if we can discover anything which may justify the assertion that His yoke is easy, and His burden light.

I. The yoke of Christ is easy, and His burden light, because we bear it with the approbation of conscience. The yoke which is borne by a good conscience is always light; the burden which does not consist of sin is never heavy.

II. This yoke is easy because it is borne in love. Love lightens labour, lessens adversity, sweetens care, and is unconscious of a yoke which otherwise would be heavy. When we are murmuring within ourselves at the cost of our Christianity, it is because we have not yet realized the value of Christ.

III. Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden light, because it is borne with the help of the Spirit of God.

IV. Christ's words are true because His burden becomes lighter the longer it is borne. That which required effort at first is at length done with ease and enjoyment. Nobody will believe that until he has experienced it. But every Christian knows that it is true.

V. Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden light, because we are sustained under it by a good hope. Heaven and endless happiness are before us, and the assurance that *they* are reserved for *us*, while *we* are kept for *them*, steadies us beneath a weight which else might bear us down.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Christian at Work*, March 20th, 1879.

REFERENCES: xi. 30.—A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 142; *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 19. xi. 32, 33.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 294.

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**Chap. xii., ver. 6.—"In this place is One greater than the temple."**

CHRIST Greater than the Church.

I. Looking first at the things essential in the *structure* of the Church, I shall show what Christ is in relation to these. The essential things in the structure of the Church are: (1) The plan. The plan of the Christian Church is that of a temple. Christ, before the Church, was the Dwelling-place, the real Shechinah, the true primal home of the light which is to enlighten the world, the very, the incarnate Temple of God upon the earth, in His twofold nature and one Divinely-human personality; He was the very plan, pattern, and idea of the temple which the Christian Apostles proclaimed. (2) The foundation. The foundation of the Church is more than apostolic testimony, more even than

inspired truth, more than any event, however supernatural or sacred. The foundation is Christ Himself. He is the Gospel, the Cross, the Resurrection. He is God manifest, God near, God showing mercy, God rising from the dead, God offering life and peace and resurrection to the world. (3) The materials of which it is composed. Christ is the life whose life is in every stone of the temple. There is nothing mean or small or tri ial among these materials which make up Christ's house, because His worth ennobles the whole.

II. Consider the Lord's greatness in relation to the functions of the Church. These are: (1) Culture. By this we understand its internal growth in Christian excellence. Christ is everything to the Church in this process. He is the Truth, that liberates, purifies, and elevates. (2) Conquest. The power by which the Church operates is not her own, but Christ's. The commission of the Master contains the assertion of His pre-eminence. The presence which accompanies and cheers the messenger is the presence of Christ Himself. "Lo, I am with you alway." (3) Worship. The Church is a "spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God." The Church lays on the altar her thoughts, prayers, affections, capacities, gifts, achievements, the entire life of her whole membership of every individual; and she offers up these as sacrifices; but the soul and inner life of these sacrifices is thankfulness for Christ. This is the deepest fact in Christian worship.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 140.

REFERENCES: xii. 1-14.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 88. xii. 3-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,503. xii. 6.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1,275; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 292; J. B. French, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 269. xii. 7.—J. P. Gledstone, *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 301.

Chap. xii., ver. 8.—"For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.'

I. NOTE the title Jesus gives Himself: "the Son of man." He applied this phrase to Himself in all the different aspects of His great life. While He deemed His equality with God not a thing to be clutched at, He claimed, in humanity's name, more than an equality with men. In Him, as the Son of man, humanity is again restored to its sonship of God. It is the child alone who can show the father in the fatherly relationship; the neighbour can show the neighbour, the work the worker. When the Christ said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," He claimed to have done something so appalling in itself, and in its consequences, as to dwarf the most

notable of His miracles. Christ was all-human, whatever else we believe Him to be. The pure ever lives in the all, not in the part. But whence this authority with nature which Christ possessed, which was equal to the suffering of hunger within Himself, and to feed a multitude with five loaves? If it be only the triumph of the universal man in the Son of man, the triumph is so complete as to constitute Him our King and our God. For He besets us behind and before, and lays His hand upon us; we can look neither within nor without, without beholding symbols of His might, and turn neither to our past nor our future without seeing that the fortune of our race is in His hand.

III. The claim He makes on His own behalf, as "Lord even of the Sabbath day." This is but one of the many claims which Jesus made, and by which He asserted His authority to be greater, if not higher in kind, than had ever been arrogated by man before. Authority and obedience meet in Christ, and blend. He is the at-onement of the Great Father with His many children. Father and child meet and kiss each other again in Him, and are at peace. And man, if he be an hungred, can pluck the corn on the Sabbath day in the presence of the God who "will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 233.

REFERENCE: xii. 9-21.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 114.

Chap. xii., ver. 12.—"How much then is a man better than a sheep?"

THERE are few things in our Lord's teaching more interesting to notice than the enormous value which He puts upon man. Again and again He reminds us, as though we were ready to forget it, of the glory and dignity of our being. Notice a series of points in respect of which a man is better than a sheep.

I. I might mention, first of all, even his physical form and beauty. Well does the inspired Apostle liken man's body to a stately temple, well-proportioned, and perfect in all its parts. In a thousand ways it excels that of the lower creation, and proclaims that man is better and nobler than they. Are you, then, going to take that noble and beautiful form, and make it the instrument of sin? Are you going to desecrate a temple so fair? This is just what many are doing, bringing themselves down to the level of the brutes that perish, and turning their glory into shame.

II. Secondly, a man is better than a sheep, because he is endowed with reason. The true glory of man consists not in

the speed with which he can run, nor the number of pounds' weight he can lift, nor the strong wrestlers he can throw; for in these respects even the ostrich and the ass and the lion easily outmatch him. And yet what compensation intellect provides! There is no point in respect to which the brute excels us where reason does not enable us far to excel the brute. The man who leaves his mind fallow, who does not call into vigorous exercise the reasoning powers with which he is endowed, fails to realize his distinguished place in creation, and brings himself down to the level of the cattle in the field.

III. A man is better than a sheep, because he is endowed with a moral nature. He is an accountable and responsible being. Even the fact that he has it in his power to do wrong proclaims his exalted place in creation. A sheep cannot sin; but that is not because it is a superior, but because it is an inferior creature to us.

IV. How much is a man better than a sheep, when you consider his capacity of progress! In this respect he stands alone in creation, so far as it presents itself to our view.

V. How much is a man better than a sheep, in respect to his spiritual nature and his capacity for knowing God!

VI. How much is a man better than a sheep, because he is possessed of immortality! The dumb creatures of the meadow live their little life and die, and there is an end of them; but man has an existence that knows no end.

VII. A man is better than a sheep, because Christ died for him. He who made man and stamped His own image on him deemed him worth an infinite sacrifice, and spared not His own Son for his redemption.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 147.

REFERENCES: xii. 10-12.—T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 130. xii. 10-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,485. xii. 12.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 32. xii. 14-37.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 205. xii. 15.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 128. xii. 15-21.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 16. xii. 18-21.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 65. xii. 19-21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,147; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 46. xii. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 6; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 202; G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 154.

**Chap. xii., ver. 21.—"In His name shall the Gentiles trust."**

OBSERVE—I. What is involved in the significant phrase, "His name." There may be very much or very little in a name taken

merely as a sign for personal identification. But if any more than this be attempted, and if it be given as descriptive of certain predispositions to nature, and of certain virtues of mind and manners, it may contain far too much or too little. There is nothing more appropriate than a great name for a great man, or a good name for a good man; but the little is sorrowfully encumbered when he has to bear a name made conspicuous by virtue or by genius. Great care was taken in the naming of the Christ. The name was to be descriptive, and to be expressive of that which was to be the great function of His coming. It was to be suggestive not only of greatness, but of that greatness which was to be peculiarly and eternally His own. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." The great radical idea of operative Christianity is salvation; it is only as this is being realized that its other aspects are of value to man. The name of Jesus was to symbolize the whole of morality in the sum and symmetry of a perfect combination.

II. What is involved in the trust which the Gentiles were to repose in it. The nations were to trust Him, not as some to-day are disposed to do, as a beneficial force amidst the powers which make for civilization. That He had been and is this no honest thinker can, we imagine, well doubt. But the Gentiles were to trust Him as that which He assumed Himself to be, and for that which He had done, and for the more He claimed the ability of doing. They must trust Christ for far more than they can understand or have the power to conceive, and trust that all things are in arrangement to "work together for good." To have this trust in Him, the nations must be convinced of the fulness not only of His manhood, but of the perfectness and all-comprehensiveness of His knowledge of all that is above man. It is when man has discovered that he can know no more of God than is revealed in Christ that he is justified in seeking only for godliness after Christ. If He be believed when He says, "Whosoever hath seen Me hath seen the Father," man has no higher wisdom to expect; it suffices him, and he trusts.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 257.

REFERENCES: xii. 22.—T. Evans, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., xii. 22-30.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 284; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 102. xii. 28.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 10. xii. 30.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 190; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 225.

Chap. xii., ver. 31.—"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."

I. First, it may be said what the unpardonable sin is not. It cannot be any sin from which men ever have repented; for wherever God has given repentance He has given pardon; no sin, therefore, which has ever been repented of is the unpardonable sin. And yet what very awful and exceeding sins have been pardoned or might have been pardoned. No course even of sin, no act of deadly sin, following even upon a course of sin, if it admits the pang of penitence, shuts out from pardon. What is really dead feels not. No past sin hinders from penitence. The faintest longing to love is love; the very dread to miss for ever the face of God is love; the very terror at that dreadful state where none can love is love.

II. And now to approach the sacred text itself. And here, because Satan would ever tempt to despair of God's mercy those whom he has tempted, through presuming upon it, to sin, our good Lord accompanies the awful sentence on that one sin which hath no forgiveness with the largest, almost boundless, assurance of mercy on all besides. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was not one sort of guilt, but many in one. It was the guilt of those who had the very presence of their Lord, who witnessed His love and holiness, who saw the power of God, but out of envy and malice obstinately resisted the light, and ascribed that which was the very working of the Spirit of Holiness to the unclean spirit. And this sin was in its very nature unpardonable, not because God would not pardon it upon repentance, but because it cut off repentance from itself, turning into sin the very miracles of mercy which should have drawn it to repentance.

III. For us is this fearful picture of completed disease given, that we may shun the very slightest taint and touch of its infecting breath. Let us labour, through God's grace, to grow in all other graces which are opposed to every trace and shade of deadly sin; let us pray for deeper awe, for truer penitence, for loving fear, for fearing love; so shall we, in the increase of our inward life, have the witness of His Spirit to us that we are not decaying unto death; so shall we, after this brief, weary struggle, enter our everlasting rest, behold the ever-living Truth, and by His all-pervading love, love Himself in Himself, and all in Him.

E. B. Pusey, *Selected Occasional Sermons*, p. 225.

Chap. xii., vers. 31, 32.

THE "speaking or blaspheming against the Holy Ghost is the sign of a very rancorous and very violent dislike in the heart against Him; and it is not the word taken abstractedly, but that evil and determinate state of heart which that word proves which constitutes the "sin against the Holy Ghost."

I. We have in the Bible four separate sins against the Holy Ghost laid out in a certain order and progression. (1) First, there is the grieving of the Holy Ghost. This occurs when you allow something in your heart and life which impedes and weakens the Spirit's inward work. (2) Next, in the downward course, comes resisting the Holy Ghost. And that is when, with great resolution, you set yourself positively to act contrary to the known and declared will and precepts of the Spirit. (3) From this it is an easy step to quench Him; when, being vexed and annoyed at influences which restrain you, or by voices which condemn you within, you endeavour to put it out, as water on fire, stifling it that it may die—overlaying the work of God within you, in order that you may escape. (4) There is a fourth stage, when the mind, through a long course of sin, proceeds to such a violent dislike and abhorrence of the Spirit of God that all infidel thoughts and horrid imaginations come into the mind. The man obstructs and withstands the kingdom of Christ everywhere; and that is the unpardonable sin.

II. The misery and horror of that state lies in this, that it is a state that cannot repent. It cannot make one move towards God. The Spirit is gone. There is no pardon now, because there can be no desire for pardon. There is and there can be in that man no gleam of spiritual thought, because the Author and Giver of it is gone for ever.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 359.

I. OBSERVE, Christ speaks of Himself here as the Son of *man*, the Son of God in a disguise, as it were; God under the veil of human flesh. Can we wonder that He should look with a merciful and forgiving eye upon any of His brethren who, not suspecting His greatness, should rudely jostle against Him in the crowd? Suppose, for instance, a king were to assume for purposes of state the disguise of a subject, and to mingle with the simplest and rudest of his people, and suppose that while in such disguise he were to meet with an insult; would not a broad line of demarcation be drawn between an insult so offered and an act of avowed treason against the king upon his throne?

A comparison of this kind will be of considerable help to us in understanding our subject. Even the murderers of Christ sinned against the Son of man, against Christ in His human nature; whereas, had they known who it was whom they crucified, many might possibly have been overwhelmed with shame and have besought His forgiveness.

II. But in the case of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost no such plea can be set up. Here we have a sin not against God in the guise of Jesus the son of Joseph the carpenter, but against God in His essential Deity, God upon the throne of heaven, God who does good and is the Author of all good both in heaven and earth. The sin of the Jews which our Lord rebuked partook of this character; for they had said that He was under the influence of, and in league with, an unclean spirit; to do good, to love mercy, and to perform acts which undeniably tended to overturn the kingdom of Satan and establish the kingdom of God—this, they said, was the work of the devil. Now unquestionably this was to put darkness for light and light for darkness, to confound all distinctions between good and evil, to confuse the works of Satan and those of the Most High God, as though they were not the exact opposites of each other. The person who does fully commit this sin places himself exactly in the position of the lost angels; the sin of Satan is that of deliberately worshipping evil and hating good, and on this account is unpardonable sin—unpardonable for this reason, if for no other, that it cannot be repented of.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 350.

REFERENCES: xii. 31, 32.—P. J. Gloag, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 206; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 352; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 321; R. Scott, *University Sermons*, p. 64; J. C. Hare, *The Victory of Faith*, p. 288.

### Chap. xii., ver. 33.—"The tree is known by his fruit."

I. IT is possible to ascertain our true state and character. What plainer evidence of this could be desired than these words, "The tree is known by his fruit"? As certainly as the tree is known by his fruit may we know our spiritual state and character if we will only be honest, nor act like the merchant who, suspecting his affairs to be verging on brankruptcy, shuts his eyes to the danger, takes no stock, and strikes no balance.

II. Our religious profession is not always a test of our state. (1) It may be a test in certain circumstances. Though it does not prove the possession of religion in the time of peace, show

me a man, like the house standing its ground against the sweep of floods, or the soldier following his colours into the thick of battle, who holds fast the profession of his faith in the face of obloquy, of persecution, of death itself, and there is little room to doubt that his piety is genuine—that he has the root of the matter in him. (2) The profession of religion is not a test of the reality of religion in our times. The tide has turned, and those who now make a profession of zealous and active piety find themselves no longer opposed to the stream and spirit of the age. This is a subject of gratitude. Yet it suggests caution in judging of ourselves, and warns us to take care, since a profession of religion is rather fashionable than otherwise, that in making it we are not the creatures of fashion, but new creatures in Jesus Christ.

III. The true evidence of our state is to be found in our heart and habits. The tree is known by his fruits—by their fruits ye shall know them.

T. GUTHRIE, *Speaking to the Heart*, p. 163.

REFERENCES: xii. 34.—J. Ker, *Sermons*, p. 121. xii. 35.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 177; E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 74.

Chap. xii., vers. 36, 37.—"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," etc.

IDLE words may, in a very general way, be defined as words that issue out of a condition of idleness—fruitless, useless hours. The care of speech is eminently a fit training which the Gospel ordains.

I. There are a great many words that are like dust-cloths. They remove grime; they drive away unpleasant thought and feeling; they change the temperament. There are a great many things in conversation that tend to make men cheerful, that tend to put springs under the waggon of life to make it go easier along in the rough road. All these things are edifying in their own way. They polish, they brighten, they comfort, they cheer; they keep people above melancholy and gloom, and that itself is very desirable.

II. One kind of idle words is tattling. It is a kind of gay frivolity upon a line of things which require sobriety and charity. It proceeds neither from wit nor from humour, nor from rectitude; but it is amusing ourselves with the thousand little scraps that relate to men and their affairs. Not only is it of no benefit to them, but it is bad for us and bad for them.

III. Boasting is another form of idle speech. There is a vast amount of it which springs up in youth and does not die out in manhood. It is a sort of bidding one's self up in the market. It indicates the want of any high self-measuring, and is very foolish and idle.

IV. Profane swearing is an utterance of sacred names or of sacred things in a light, trifling, and, worse still, in a malicious and angry mood. Swearing is some men's idea of boldness. But God forbid that any man who values aught that is noble and sweet and pure in men, in angels, and in God should indulge in this most demoralizing habit! There is the best reason in the world, in philosophy, in politeness, in neighbourly charity, why one's mouth should be kept free and clean from all profanity. It is the violation of decency and honour; it is the violation of every noble instinct.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 268.

REFERENCES: xii. 36.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 30. xii. 36, 37.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 19.

Chap. xii., ver. 37.—"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

CONSIDER some of the ways by which words are used that minister to our condemnation.

I. At the head of this list we must put profane swearing.

II. Another way in which we expose ourselves to God's displeasure is by what St. Paul calls "foolish talking."

III. Another example of the improper use of the gift of speech is an indulgence in the petulant and complaining language which so often destroys the harmony of private life.

IV. A fourth illustration of our text is found in the case of misrepresentation and slander.

V. Angry words are another description of words by which we may endanger our everlasting salvation.

J. N. NORTON, *Old Paths*, p. 144.

Chap. xii., ver. 38.—"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee."

IN every age, and perhaps more as the world grows older, men's hearts are apt to utter the same wish. The mind, afloat, as it were, on a vast sea, needs, and with reason, a sure anchor. Man cannot tell us of what man has never seen. We crave for the very heaven itself to be opened; we crave to see the light in which God dwells; we crave to hear the voice of Him to

whom all things are known, who can neither be deceived nor deceive.

I. This feeling is in its own nature nothing blamable. All belief is not deserving of the name of faith, and it is greatly against the wisdom of God to confound them. If God were to give us no answer at all when we ask for a sign from heaven, no man could be blamed for remaining in uncertainty; on the contrary, to believe a thing merely because we do not like the feeling of ignorance about it is no better than folly. Or again, it might have been possible that God should have given us the very exact answer we desired. But neither of these is our actual case; we are not left in utter ignorance, nor raised to perfect knowledge. There is a state between these two, and that is properly the state of faith. There is no place for faith in entire ignorance; for to believe then were mere idle guessing; it would not be faith, but folly. Nor, again, is there any place for faith in perfect knowledge; for knowledge is something more than believing. The place for faith is between both.

II. That Christ died and rose from the dead is the great work which God has wrought for our satisfaction; it is not absolutely the only sign which He has ever given—far from it; but it is the greatest, and goes most directly to that question which we most long to have answered. It assures us of God that He loves us, and will love us for ever. To those who think upon it fully it does become the real sign from heaven which was required; for it brought God into the world, and the world near to God. He who has the evidence of the Spirit not only believes that Christ rose and was seen of Peter and of the other apostles; Christ has manifested Himself to him also; he knows in whom he has believed. The heaven is opened, and the angels of God are every hour ascending and descending on that son of man who, through a living faith in Christ, has been adopted through Him to be a son of God.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 7.

### Chap. xii., vers. 38-43.

TRUTH through and by life. Consider in what respects Christ was greater than Solomon.

I. The Proverbs could not well be spared from the Bible nor dropped out of the life of the world. They are of highest use, and ought to be read and re-read, for their wisdom, their broad interpretation of life, and their ethical value. If they were heeded and obeyed they would bring the individual, the family,

the community, the nation into a state of ideal perfection. Their lack is that they have no power to turn into living moulding energy. They simply state truth and prescribe conduct. They are impersonal, and have no living force to drive them home. Truth must be incarnated in a just representative in order to be powerful. This is the weakness of the Proverbs viewed as effective agents; they are without incarnation. The truth taught by Solomon went out naked into the world, and weighted by his failure to realize it in himself.

II. Turn now to Christ. We can match nearly every precept of Christ with a like one from Solomon. Why does it not appeal to us with equal force? (1) Christ had a single, solid background for His truth—God the Father; while Solomon spoke from an observation of human life, or rather of the world as it goes. Hence Christ's truth wore an eternal character, and was as the voice of God Himself; it was absolute; it came from above, and was not picked up here and there. (2) There is also a wide unlikeness in the tone of their teachings, especially if the Book of Ecclesiastes be referred to Solomon. This book stands in the Bible rather as a warning than a guide, telling us how not to think of life. Life is a puzzle; time and chance have sway. Christ's teachings are the contrast to this. Life is no puzzle to Him; it presents no question. Everywhere and always there is one clear, unvarying note sounding an eternal destruction between good and evil, declaring life to be good and a path to blessedness. (3) There is another contrast between these two teachers: one made but small personal indication of his teaching, while the other brought His life into ideal harmony with all that He taught. The lesson is beyond expression practical. We know no truth except by action. We can teach no vital truth except through the life. We cannot attain to the eternal joy except as we walk step by step in that path of actual duty and performance in which He walked, who so gained its fulness and sat down at the right hand of the Father.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Appeal to Life*, p. 47.

REFERENCE: xii. 38-50.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 215.

Chap. xii., vers. 39, 40.—"The sign of the prophet Jonas," etc.

JONAH being spoken of in the text as a type of Christ, let us consider that part of his history which is typical. It is contained in the first and second chapters, and presents us with the following pictures:—

I. Man shunning God's presence. Like those mariners who, leaving the sacred soil which was the place of God's sanctuary and the scene of God's revelations, launched forth upon the waste salt billows and made for the great heathen mart of Tarshish, so went man forth from his primitive condition of holy bliss, to seek diversion from the thoughts of God and judgment, to seek entertainment for a few short hours in the traffic and merchandise of the world.

II. God's awful wrath in consequence of man's departure from Him. The raging tempest, which well-nigh broke the ship wherein Jonah was embarked, supplies us with a just emblem of the wrath of God. By nature we live and move in the element of that wrath. Every man who has not by a personal appropriating faith laid hold of the hope set before him in the Gospel is at this moment in imminent peril.

III. The vain attempts made by man to propitiate an offended God. The great majority of men instinctively seek to have something which may serve them to fall back upon in the hour of affliction and distress. Acknowledging by a certain natural instinct that there is a God, and that they have offended Him, men will do everything but that which is required of them to make their peace with Him and obtain His favour. But then sacrifices, the mere dictates of natural religion, cannot avail to turn away the wrath of God.

IV. The Divine method of propitiation by the death of Christ. Jonah's being taken up and cast into the sea is a figurative representation of Christ's being made over, as our Substitute, to the fury of God's indignation.

V. The last point shadowed forth in Jonah's history is the triumph of Christ over death and hell—meaning by that latter term the place of departed spirits. Jonah, being swallowed by the fish, was miraculously preserved alive within it, and was afterwards delivered from his marvellous hiding-place and laid upon the dry land in safety. Christ rose again the third day from the dead, in a body identical indeed with that which hung upon the cross, but spiritual, eternal, heavenly, adapted to a new and imperishable condition of existence.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in Holywell*, p. 23.

REFERENCES: xii. 40.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 165. xii. 41.—*Ibid.*, *Old Paths*, p. 487; W. M. Punshon, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 19. xii. 42.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 533; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 209; Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 257; J. Hamilton, *The Royal Preacher*, p. 31. xii. 43.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 132.

xii. 43-45.—T. R. Evans, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 88; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,648.

Chap. xii., ver. 45.—"The last state of that man is worse than the first."

GROWING Worse.

I. It must be remembered that we all begin with certain faults—different persons with different faults. What we mean by a man's character getting worse is that these faults in us strengthen and increase. But is it an unaccountable and strange process, that by which faults grow? By no means. It is the simplest process in the world; it is simply by repeating a faulty action or humour time after time. We have only to go on in the same way, and, at the end of the time, we have a worse fault; for that is the nature of habit, that it grows by mere repetition of the same conduct and becomes a stronger habit. But if the sinful habit is stronger, then the man is a worse man.

II. People often go on getting worse and worse, letting sin grow, but thinking it all the time quite impossible that they should be worse. That idea which they started with they never give up—the idea that they never can alter for the bad. All alteration, they think, must be for the better; if they have not improved, then they are the same they always were; but worse they cannot be. It is this deep ingrained assumption in men's minds which blinds them to the most startling facts about themselves. They are now absorbed in covetous passions and worldly aims; they have fierce desires to get this and that earthly prize; they sacrifice honesty; they do the meanest acts; they are guilty of constant pieces of deception in order to win them. There was a day when they would have shrunk from this; now they do it all as a matter of course; but still they have no idea that they are at all worse than they were. It is always circumstances that change, never themselves. But Scripture everywhere says plainly that men do grow worse in this life, and that they grow worse out of themselves; and therefore it is that they reap the wages of death, because it is their own sin. Let us look to ourselves, to our own hearts, and watch and correct evil at its fount; for there is the fount of it. J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 118.

REFERENCES: xii. 45.—B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 83; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 203.

Chap. xii., vers. 46-50.

JESUS and His Brethren.

Consider—I. the brethren of the boyhood of Jesus. Christ

was born into the home and was to live in a brotherhood, with no opportunity for exclusiveness permitted Him. He acted and was acted upon by the brotherhood of the home and the neighbourhood. That He passed stainlessly at length into His manhood, ought to go for something as a declaration of the mysterious virtue that He was. Having been made like unto His brethren, and lived sinlessly under the conditions of human brotherhood, He is able to succour the brotherhood, and the brotherhood is able to have faith to receive the succour.

II. The brethren of the manhood of Jesus. "He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold, My mother and My brethren." The idea we have of brotherhood to begin with must suffer in the losses of our after experiences, and participate in the benefits of our highest gains. If the sanctities of childhood be lost with the purities of mankind unattained, our conception of brotherhood may be modified to the extent even of losing its central and essential idea. The impure selfish man has no brother if he continues long enough in his impurity, but only a confederate in his sin. On the other hand, if man turn the negative of his childhood into the positive of his manhood, and arise by persistent endeavour and trust in God from innocence into virtue, there will be a correspondent elevation and expansion of his sense of brotherhood. Man is then his brother, not because he is of his kin, but of his kind; not because he is of his nation, but of his nature. Men are called into the brotherhood of Christ's manhood, not because of what they have and are in themselves, but because of that which they can be made to see to be for them in God; they know themselves in Him, and find each other in the light of His countenance, and in the light of God there is but little difference between man and man. We can all be very near to the Christ, for we can all serve if we cannot command. The brotherhood is broad, and such as fitted the God-man to have formed.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 281.

REFERENCES: xii. 46-50.—G. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 5. xii. 48-50.—W. Arthur, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 201; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 284. xii. 49, 50.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 474.

Chap. xii., ver. 50.—"For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

WE have here two things—a character and a blessing.

I. "Whosoever shall do the will of God." So, then, God has a will. This thought, familiar as it is to us, was a thought

to which man by searching could not attain. God is no mere personification or idealization of accident or destiny. God is no mechanical setter in motion or preserver in motion of the wheel of nature or the world of being. (1) God has a will concerning our condition. The will of God is that we should become a new creation by means of the work of the Holy Ghost. It is the will of God that our condition may be changed, so that they who before fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind should become altogether holy, which is, being interpreted, altogether His. (2) God has a will concerning our conduct. I know not that anything more wonderfully expresses God's love for us than this thought: God cares how I act. "It is the will of God that ye stand perfect and complete." Can any lot be abject, can any life be trivial, can any day or hour be without its glory, if the eye of God is upon it, and if the mind of God is exercised upon its being this or that? (3) God has a will concerning our destiny. The words are His own. He will have all men to be saved. He would have you for one of those vessels of mercy which He hath before prepared unto glory.

II. Consider, next, the blessing. "The same is My brother and sister and mother." There is a higher than any natural relationship into which he enters who has drunk Christ's Spirit. He that doeth the will of God is Christ's brother. Not connected with Him by home or parentage, he shall have a dearer and a closer tie still; he shall have the same spirit; he shall be nearer to Him for ever than the dearest son of His mother could have been to Him for one moment below; he shall have Christ to dwell in his heart by faith, and he who so dwells shall be not more his God than his brother. Miss not that dignity, that glory, for any other; for anything that is of the earth earthy. Whatever else thou hast or hast not, yet miss not this; for it is a tie which nothing can sever, it is a crown of beauty which can never fade away.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 177.

REFERENCES: xii. 50.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 235; J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 347; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 410.

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Chap. xiii., vers. 1-9.

THE Parable of the Sower.

In the parable of the sower there is nothing at all novel. Our Saviour did not affect novelty in His illustrations of what He

had to say to men about Divine truth; and however new and however strange might be some of the doctrines which He preached, His illustrations of those doctrines were such as all people could very well comprehend.

I. "A sower went forth to sow." (1) By the sower our Lord first of all means Himself. And that was His work chiefly —sowing the seeds of Divine truth in the minds of men. As to the reaping, the reaping began, we may say, on the day of Pentecost, when our Lord reaped a sheaf of first-fruits in the conversion of five thousand souls; and the reaping resulting from our Lord's sowing has been going on ever since. (2) But meaning Himself first of all, He surely by this sower that goes forth to sow meant His apostles and the seventy disciples whom He sent out to preach the Gospel.

II. Then, in the next place, as to the seed. The sower is the Son of God, as we have seen, and all Christ's people engaged in this very work of sowing. The seed is the Word of God. And as the seed is the Word of God, let us recognize the importance of being truly, thoroughly, honestly scriptural.

III. The ground represents the heart, such as the heart may be—the heart rather than the head, the affections rather than the intellect. There is nothing fatalistic in the parable, nothing to drive to despair the man who feels he is bad and wishes to be a true Christian, and nothing to encourage in sin the man who has no desire after good things. God's grace can do for the heart, be it what it may, what man's skill has done a thousand times for the land that he cultivates. There are some who know that their hearts were once as hard as a turnpike road, and are now as soft as a newly-ploughed and harrowed field where waves the autumn corn. There are some whose hearts, like the stony ground, are full of thorns, but now the good seed is bearing fruit there; and if any man feels his heart is like the wayside, or the stony place, or the thorny ground, let him cry to God for His grace, and He will subdue all these evils and make his heart into the honest and the good heart, that shall yield fruit to His own glory and to the man's comfort.

H. Stowell Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 376.

**Chap. xiii., vers 1-9 and 18-23.**

The Parable of the Sower. Notice the various obstacles which successively meet the seed and mar its fruitfulness.

I. The wayside. There is a condition of heart which corresponds to the smoothness, hardness, and wholeness of a

frequented footpath that skirts or crosses a ploughed field. The spiritual hardness is like the natural in its cause as well as in its character. The place is a thoroughfare; a mixed multitude of this world's affairs tread over it from day to day, and from year to year. The soil, trodden by all comers, is never broken up and softened by a thorough self-searching. Owing to its hardness, it does not take the seed into its bosom.

II. The stony ground. A human heart, the soil on which the sower casts his seed, is in itself and from the first hard both above and below; but by a little easy culture, such as most people in this land enjoy, some measure of softness is produced on the surface. Among the affections, when they are warm and newly stirred, the seed speedily springs. Many young hearts, subjected to the religious appliances which abound in our time, take hold of Christ and let Him go again. In the rich young man the seed sprang hopefully, but it withered soon; he did not lightly part with Christ, but he parted; he was very sorrowful, but he went away.

III. The thorns. In the application of the lesson this term must be understood not specifically, but generically. In the natural object it indicates any species of useless weed that occupies the ground and injures the growing crop; in the spiritual application it points to the worldly cares, whether they spring from poverty or wealth, which usurp in a human heart the place due to Christ and His saving truth. (1) Thorns and thistles occupying the field suck in the sap which should go to nourish the good seed, and leave it a living skeleton. (2) Thorns and thistles, favoured as indigenous plants by the suitableness of soil and climate, outgrow the grain both in breadth and height.

IV. The good ground. While all the ground that was broken, deep and clean in spring and summer, bears fruit in harvest, some portions produce a larger return than others. While all believers are safe in Christ, each should covet the best gifts.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 43.

REFERENCES: xiii. 1.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 395. xiii. 1-3.—*Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 32. xiii. 1-8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 24. xiii. 1-23.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 225; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 14. xiii. 1-52.—*Ibid.*, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 44.

Chap. xiii., vers. 3, 4.

I. THE beaten path. Let us think about that type of character which is here set forth under the image of the wayside. It is a

heart trodden down by the feet that have gone across it; and because trodden down, a heart incapable of receiving the seed sown. The seed falls *upon* it, not *in* it. Notice two or three ways by which the heart becomes trodden down. (1) The heart is trodden down by custom and habit. There is a process going on which makes it absolutely certain that, the further you advance in life, the less you will be capable of being influenced even by the divinest truths of God's Word. (2) The heart is trodden down by sin. It is not the least sad and awful of the widespread consequences of sin, that it uniformly works in the direction of unfitting men to receive God's love. The more we need it the less we are able to lay hold of it. (3) The heart is trodden down by the very feet of the sower. Every sermon that an ungodly man hears which leaves him ungodly, leaves him, not as it found him, but harder by the passage of the Word once more across his heart, harder by the rejection once more of God's grace.

II. The lost seed. Sown on the surface of a hardened heart, it lies there for a little while and does nothing. But only for a little while; it is soon carried off. He who sows tares roots up growing wheat, and does not neglect to sweep away the seed. His chosen instruments are those light, swift-winged, apparently innocent flocks of flying thoughts, that come swooping across your souls even whilst the message of God's love is sounding in your ears. With most men it is the constant succession of petty cares, the constant occupation of heart and mind with trivial subjects and passing good, much rather than any conscious fixed resolve to shut their souls against Christ and His love, that steals away the Word from their memories and thoughts. "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we be drifted past them."

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 280.

REFERENCES: xiii. 3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 429 xiii. 3-8.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 119; J. R. Macduff, *Parables of the Lake*, p. 49. xiii. 3-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 50; G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 135. xiii. 3-23.—S. Cox, *An Expositor's Notebook*, p. 213.

**Chap. xiii., vers. 3-50.**

THE Parables of the Kingdom.

I. Taking these seven parables all together, notice, first, the fact that our Lord, in describing the kingdom of heaven, did de-

liberately use many parables, and those strikingly different from one another. The kingdom of heaven is a many-sided thing, and there are many ways of looking at it, all of which may be true ways, though differing very greatly.

II. The kingdom of heaven, as Christ expounded it, is the Gospel, the word of salvation, everywhere preached, yet most variously received—as in the first parable; it is the Gospel, true and pure and genuine in its beginning, but rapidly intermingled in its upgrowth with spurious and baleful imitations—as in the second parable.

III. But if it be evidently the Gospel, it is as evidently the Church, the outward and visible form, which waxes from less to more, which embodies before the eyes of men the principle of life which animates it, which testifies by its rapid growth to the wondrous vigour of that hidden principle—as in the third parable, of the mustard seed.

IV. But the kingdom of heaven is also a moral force—the force of moral and social principles. It is a leaven ever working outwards as long as there is any human society left to work upon; a leaven working far beyond the visible pale of the Church, though producing everywhere but a partial change—as in the fourth parable, of the hidden leaven.

V. But, lastly, the kingdom of Christ is Christ Himself, the real treasure, the great object of desire; for whose sake alone any outward acquisition is valuable; yet for whose sake the loss of all things were indeed gain. It is Christ Himself, the personal Saviour, found and appropriated at any cost—as in the fifth and sixth of our parables.

VI. The sevenfold arrangement intimates that we are to look for a certain unity of plan and completeness of execution about these parables. It means that they represent among them all the possible aspects of Christianity; and they also represent in their order and arrangement the historical development of Christianity from first to last. Poets and philosophers have written of the seven ages of man. I believe that we may speak with much more certainty of the seven stages through which the kingdom of heaven passes towards its final state.

R. WINTERBOTHAM, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 108.

REFERENCES: xiii. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 62; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 149.

### Chap. xiii., vers. 10-17.

THE Parables of Christ.

I. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given," etc. Here a

universal law is announced as the explanation of the gift to the disciples of understanding mysteries, and of the difference between them and others. *Whosoever* hath, *whosoever* hath not. Is it not assumed in that universal statement—is it not affirmed—that every man has received certain things which the Bestower will increase if he hold them fast, but which he may let go and be left utterly bare? And what are these things? If there is the least connection between this verse and that which precedes it, they are *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.* These are the treasures—not lying far from any man—to which these fishermen had not foregone their claim, and which no one can relinquish without abandoning his rights, without renouncing his manhood.

II. For thus He goes on: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Seeing, hearing, understanding—these are admitted powers of human beings. To be without them is a fearful penalty, the exception to a rule. Is it not intimated to us that there is something exactly corresponding to these organs of sense in the spirit of man; that an eye is there which may be opened or may be closed; an ear is there which may be awake to take in a voice that is speaking to it or may be stopped; a capacity for profiting by the vision, for yielding to the voice, which may be continually expanded, or may continually become more contracted? If there is this correspondence between the organs of the spirit and the organs of sense, does not that explain to us the meaning and power of the parables? May not all sensible things, by a necessity of their nature, be testifying to us of that which is nearest to us, of that which it most concerns us to know, of the mysteries of our own life and of God's relation to us? May it not be impossible for us to escape from these witnesses? They may become insignificant to us from our very familiarity with them; nay, we may utterly forget that there is any wonder in them. The universe may become actually "as is a landscape to a dead man's eye;" all the business in which we are ourselves engaged, a routine which must be got through in some way or another, that we may have leisure to eat, drink, and sleep. Can any language describe this state so accurately and vividly as that of our Lord in the text? Seeing we see, and do not perceive; hearing we hear, and do not understand.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 165.

Chap. xiii., ver. 12.—"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

To Him that hath shall be given—a law of the Christian Sabbath. Let us illustrate this doctrine by a reference:

I. To nations. If there were any land in which the higher uses of the Sabbath were universally understood and enjoyed, we should be able to show there, in their full measure, the temporal benefits with which it is charged; but, alas! such an example cannot be found on earth. In Popish countries generally, and in some that are nominally Protestant, you may see the operation of the law in its threatening aspect. From those who have not kept the Sabbath holy the weekly rest has been taken away. In the medley of sounds which constitutes the hum of Paris on the Lord's Day, a Christian distinguishes with sadness the clatter of the mechanic's tool. The nation that gives up the day to pleasure does not retain the day for rest.

II. Classes. Those classes in a great city who most fully employ the Sabbath for its higher ends must fully enjoy its subordinate benefits; those who renounce the spiritual lose the temporal too.

III. Persons. The law holds good in the experience of individuals as well as in that of communities and classes. Those who do not value the higher uses of the Sabbath will fail to attain the lower. The only way of keeping the world out of our Sabbath is to keep Christ in. If from want of taste for it we abandon spiritual communion with the Lord on His own day, the material benefit of bodily rest will slip from our hands. The evil spirits hovering round press like air upon the privilege; the moment they find the room empty they rush in. The weekly Sabbath, where its spiritual uses are lost, becomes a loathsome thing. When the Lord is banished from His day, the adversary takes possession of it, and makes it the period of heaviest drudgery to his slaves.

W. ARNOT, *Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life*, p. 388.

REFERENCE: xiii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,488.

Chap. xiii., ver. 13.—"Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

CHRIST here touches upon a common fact of our human nature—spiritual insensibility; that state in which spiritual things pass before a man, and instead of being beautiful and blessed realities

they are meaningless to him. Nor is there anything strange or fanciful in this representation. Men come in contact with nature, art, charity, and yet are insensible to them; and, similarly, they may come, and often do come, in contact with that which is infinitely more important,—the truth as it is in Jesus,—and yet fail to discern its significance and reality. Now, what are some of the steps by which this gross, callous, insensitive state is reached?

I. It is induced by all kinds of depravity. This is one of the penalties of wrong-doing, that the moral nature is deteriorated and made unresponsive to spiritual things. Sin does not merely plunge a man into an external darkness; it fills his inward being with darkness. It does not merely shut him out of an external heaven; it deprives him of the capacity to perceive and enjoy the heavenly.

II. Insensibility to spiritual things frequently grows in a man through the mastery of worldly pursuits. Diligence in all lawful, heaven-appointed callings is a part of every man's Christian duty. But it is possible to be enslaved even of that which is lawful and God-ordained. These duties may so engross a man's thought and energies that, in the course of time, he becomes indifferent to everything else. The many worlds which lie outside of his own little world are as though they did not exist.

III. The habit of cherishing doubt is another circumstance which tends to weaken spiritual vision and understanding. While the man hesitates, full of timidity and unfaith, there is a secret, silent deterioration of spiritual capacity going on. He is receding further and further into darkness. The powers of the world to come are gradually becoming mere shadows and images, flitting before his vision. This is one of the inevitable penalties of indecision. In this way, in many instances, that state is reached in which men seeing do not see; hearing they do not hear, neither do they understand.

T. HAMMOND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 163.

REFERENCE: xiii. 14, 15.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 187.

Chap. xiii., ver. 17.—"Verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

I. THE words of the text have often struck the ears of us all, and few of us, perhaps, have stopped to ask ourselves how far we

really could agree with them. Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which Christ's disciples saw and have not seen them. It seems all very natural that they should have desired it. But can we honestly say that we should have desired the same thing if we had been in their places? There is a very easy and plain way of finding out how we should have felt then, by observing what we feel now. We may guess how much we should have longed for a thing before we had got it, by seeing how much we value it now that we have got it. If we find that we do not care about it when it is put in our way, we may be very sure that we should never have missed it before we had it, and that we should never have gone out of our way to obtain it.

II. The means of grace to the soul are like the means of health and strength to the body, and at such a rate would a true Christian value them. We are ever taking thought about what we shall eat and what we shall drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed. But the wants of the soul do not so easily win our attention; the love of our spiritual life, the love of life eternal, is not half so strong within us as the love of our natural life. Our souls are, by nature, far weaker and more sickly than our bodies, and therefore they require much greater care. Therefore every means of grace that we have we should make the most of; and not the best man alive is furnished with one more than is needful for him. But though the best of us cannot afford to spare any of the means which God has given us, yet the worst of us will find that they have enough, if they will but carefully improve them. Every one of us has the means of grace put within his reach sufficient to save his soul if he will. He can learn the way of salvation; he can know those things which many prophets and kings desired to know, and never had their desire fulfilled.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 37.

REFERENCES: xiii. 21.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 80. xiii. 23.—T. M. Herbert, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 127; E. R. Conder, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 428.

Chap. xiii., vers. 24-30.

I. IT was "while men slept" that the enemy sowed his tares among the wheat. The phrase is equivalent to "at night," and must not be further urged. This enemy seized his opportunity when all eyes were closed in sleep, and wrought the secret mischief upon which he was intent, and, having wrought it undetected, withdrew.

II. The enemy that sowed them is the devil. We behold Satan here, not as he works beyond the limits of the Church, deceiving the world, but in his far deeper malignity, as he at once mimics and counterworks the work of Christ.

III. The mischief done, the enemy "went his way," and thus the work did not evidently at once appear to be his. How often, in the Church, the beginnings of evil have been scarcely discernible, and that which bore the worst fruit in the end will have shown at first like a higher form of good.

IV. In the question, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" the temptation to use violent means for the suppression of error—a temptation which the Church itself has sometimes failed to resist—finds its voice and utterance. But they who thus speak are unfit to be trusted in the matter. Our Lord's answer, "Nay," does not imply that the tares shall never be plucked up, but only that this is not the time, and they not the doers. "Let both grow together until the harvest,"—pregnant words, which tell us that evil is not, as many dream, gradually to wane and disappear before good, the world to find itself in the Church, but each to unfold itself more fully out of its own root, till at last they stand face to face, each in its highest manifestation, in the persons of Christ and of Antichrist—on the one hand an incarnate God, on the other the man in whom the fulness of all Satanic power will dwell bodily. Both must grow until the harvest—till they are ripe, one for destruction, and the other for full salvation.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 80.

REFERENCES: xiii. 24.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 81. xiii. 24, 25.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 175. xiii. 24-30.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 122; R. Calderwood, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 199; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 470; M. Lucas, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 355; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 80; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 199; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 163; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 38; C. Kingsley, *Discipline and other Sermons*, p. 274. xiii. 24-43.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 235; J. R. Macduff, *Parables of the Lake*, p. 72.

### Chap. xiii., vers. 25, 26.

IN the text, three things are hinted at by Christ with respect to the presence of evil among the good.

I. Here, first, is the secrecy, the undiscernibleness of its beginnings—"while men slept;" words which could hardly have been meant to indicate negligence or inattention on the

part of those who should have been alert and watchful, and whose vigilance might have prevented the hostile sowing, since the servants, who later on ejaculate their astonishment and disappointment at what is found among the corn, are in nowise charged with having contributed to it by omission of duty. The words were intended, doubtless, as an equivalent for during the night, during the interval when men are naturally wrapt in slumber and cannot perceive what is done. The Speaker would be suggesting thus, with a passing touch, how hidden and unobserved are the beginnings of evil; how, in regard to its first startings and earlier motions, we are like them that sleep.

II. But here, again, is the facility with which it grows, its independence of fostering care or aid. "He went his way." Was not that a stroke of the artist, with which He meant to intimate the little that is needed to insure the progress and spread of evil? The enemy just sowed and went his way. What he had sown was safe to grow. Noxious weeds want no watering. Good habits have to be formed with stern endeavour and in the sweat of your brow; bad habits form themselves as we stand idly by.

III. Here is the inevitable following of evil in the wake of good; the inevitableness of its accompaniment and concurrence for a season wherever good is sown. This is what Christ prognosticated would happen—that His sowing of wheat would involve a sowing of tares. And has it not been so? With all the devotion and consecration, with the splendid courages, zeals, and self-sacrifices, which He has inspired, what bitterness and uncharitableness, what dissensions and animosities, what sourness and meanness have mingled! What Christ forebodes here are the evils incident to the very spirit of Christianity.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 339.

Chap. xiii., ver. 28.—"He said unto them, An enemy hath done this."

OBSERVE—I. what is the cause of all the evil which we see in the world and the Church. "An enemy hath done this." In so far as we are striving against that enemy, we gain courage to do the work of One who is greater than he. As there are times when man must sleep and leave an opportunity for an enemy to come in so, our Lord means to tell us there are times and circumstances in which the utmost vigilance of man cannot keep out the enemy of man. Or, in other words, his power for evil is greater than ours for good; and while the present

system lasts he will still have opportunities for fail. "While men slept"—for they are but men; and ceaseless vigilance and successful continual watching is beyond the reach of man. Understand that we must not expect perfect success for work we do for God. "While men slept;" ay, even when they are doing their very best, the enemy will interfere to hinder.

II. There is a sleep man may avoid, a failure he may prevent—a sleep of carelessness and sloth; and how much has the enemy had the opportunity to sow while men slept such a sleep as this! How often should the watcher have watched while the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat! There are lessons of warning and encouragement in those two sentences. An enemy is sowing and we are sleeping; yet how much more constantly and frequently might we wake and watch. The lesson of the text forbids our being too sanguine or having too exalted expectations in any work we engage in for God; and yet it teaches us, on the other hand, not to give up in despair. It is a lesson which forbids presumption or despondency; a lesson which warns us to more strenuous vigilance; a lesson of the loving Saviour, which teaches us, if at times, being but men, we slumber, and the enemy seizes his opportunity, perseverance, faith, courage, anything but despondency, anything but carelessness, when we are doing a work for God and for Christ.

BISHOP MAGEE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 305.

Chap. xiii., vers. 29, 30.—"But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."

THE comparison here and elsewhere set forth between the great mixed community of man and the vegetable kingdom presents many points of striking and obvious parallel. Sowing the seed—growing until the harvest—the unsparing universality of the reaping—the final separation.

I. This present life is a time of intermixture. Take a family—a household—and see what diversity of character it presents. So complete is the intermixture, that of the larger part it would be impossible to decide whether they belong to the class indicated as wheat or tares. And we are not called upon to do so. "Let both grow together until the harvest." And nothing is more arrogant and presumptuous, nothing can be less in harmony with the Spirit of Christ, than the gratuitous and peremptory manner in which some people pronounce upon this matter—anticipating the verdict of the Almighty, and drawing

a line of demarcation which as yet exists nowhere else than in the mind of God.

II. But neither does this growing together continue long, nor does this incapacity to discriminate extend to the Searcher of Hearts. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He arranges the most complex circumstances that influence our lives. He at once unravels all the intricacies of our mixed, imperfect, and entangled motives; and at once detects whether they are to be assigned to selfishness and self-aggrandisement, or to the generous principles of love, honour, and integrity which Christ has taught. And as even now with an unerring eye He distinguishes His loyal subjects from others, so hereafter with unerring hand He shall wave aside the chaff from the wheat. And this is the great harvest which is the end of the world.

III. The great practical lesson to be connected with this contemplation of the great harvest is this: That if our last hour may be compared to the gathering in of the wheat, whether it be good or bad, so the present hour is for every one of us a time for growing and ripening.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 239.

REFERENCES: xiii. 30.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 189; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 43.

**Chap. xiii., vers. 31, 32.**

THE Grain of Mustard Seed.

There are very few of our Lord's parables that can be illustrated so fully, few that get so clear a confirmation from all experience, as this. And yet to accept the principle and really live by it requires the very faith of which the parable speaks.

I. Look at history, and see how true the doctrine is, not only of the kingdom of heaven, but of every other power that has really held sway among men. In almost all cases the great, the permanent work has been done, not by those who seemed to do very much, but by those who seemed to do very little. Our Lord's founding of the Church was but the most striking instance of a universal rule.

II. There are two ways in which great men rule other men: they either sway the masses of men by an irresistible influence; or they impress on a few, either by personal intercourse or by writings, the stamp of their own character, their own thoughts. Some men have worked in both ways. But our Lord chose only one, and that the one that would seem the most obscure,

the most uncertain. He taught the multitudes; but His chief aim was certainly not to impress them. His work was to stamp the truth upon a few; but to stamp it so deep that nothing could afterwards efface it. When He did this, what was He doing? He was sowing the seed; the seed whose fruit was not yet, whose perfect fruit was not to be gathered for many centuries; the seed which seemed small and perishable, but was certain to grow into a great tree. And so too has all the greatest work been done both before and after, not often by producing immediate results, but by sowing seeds. So have sciences all grown, not from brilliant declarations to the world, but from patient labour and quiet thought, and language addressed to the few who think. So has all growth in politics always begun in the secret thoughts of men who have found the truth, and have committed it to books or to chosen learners. The true powers of human life are contained in those seeds, out of which alone comes any real and permanent good.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 138.

THE Fitness of Christianity for Mankind.

Its extraordinary power of easy expansion, its power of adapting itself to the most diverse forms of thought, is one strong proof of the eternal fitness of Christianity for mankind. This is our subject.

I. It has these powers, first, because of its want of system. Christ gave ideas, but not their forms. We have one connected discourse of His, and there is not a vestige of systematic theology in it. It seems as if Christ distinctly chose indefiniteness in certain parts of His teaching, in order to shut out the possibility of any rigid system of Christian thought. The original want of system in Christ's teaching ensures its power of expansion, and that fits it for the use of the race, now and hereafter.

II. But if this were all, it would prove nothing. There must be a quality in a religion destined to be of eternal fitness to men which directly appeals to all men, or else its want of system will only minister to its ruin. And if that quality exist, it must be one which we cannot conceive as ever failing to interest men, and therefore as expanding with the progress of man. We find this in the identification of Christianity with the life of a perfect man. What is Christianity? Christianity is Christ—the whole of human nature made at one with God. Is it possible to leave that behind as the race advances? On the contrary, the very

idea supposes that the religion which has it at its root has always an ideal to present to men, and therefore always an interest for men. So the ideal manhood which is at the root of Christianity ensures to it a power of expanding with the growth of the race; and this power is one proof at least of the eternal fitness of Christ's teaching for mankind.

III. The third quality in it which ensures its expansiveness is that it has directly to do with the subjects which have always stirred the greatest curiosity, awakened the profoundest thought, and produced the highest poetry in man. And these are the subjects which are insoluble by logical analysis, unknowable by the understanding: What is God and His relation to us? Whence have we come? Whither are we going? What is evil, and why is it here? Do we die or live for ever? It is because Christianity as taught by Christ acknowledges these questions as necessarily human; it is because it promises that those who follow the method of Christ and live His life shall solve them; that Christianity belongs to men, is calculated to expand, to suit men in every age.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 1.

THE Mustard Seed.

I. The kingdom of heaven *in the world* is like a mustard seed sown in the ground, both in the smallness of its beginning and the greatness of its increase.

II. The kingdom of heaven in *the human heart* is like a mustard seed in the smallness of its beginning and the greatness of its increase.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 101.

Chap. xiii., vers. 31, 32 (with Mark iv., vers. 30-32; Luke xiii., vers. 18, 19).

THE Mustard Seed.

I. Not Christ's doctrine merely, nor yet even the Church which He planted upon earth, is this grain of mustard seed in its central meaning. He is Himself at once the mustard seed and the man that sowed it. He is the mustard seed; for the Church was originally enclosed in Him, and unfolded itself from Him, having as much oneness of life with Him as the tree with the seed in which its rudiments were all enclosed, and out of which it grew; and the Sower, in that by a free act of His own, He gave Himself to that death whereby He became the author of life unto many.

II. This seed, when cast into the ground, is "the least of all

seeds"—words which have often perplexed interpreters, many seeds, as of poppy or rue, being smaller. Yet difficulties of this kind are not worth making; it is sufficient to know that "small as a grain of mustard seed" was a proverbial expression among the Jews for something exceedingly minute. The Lord, in His popular teaching, adhered to the popular language. And as the mustard seed so has been His kingdom. Herein it differs from the great schemes of this world; these last have a proud beginning, a shameful and miserable end; towers as of Babel, which threaten at first to be as high as heaven, but end a deserted, misshapen heap of slime and bricks; while the works of God, and most of all His chief work the Church, have a slight and unobserved beginning, with gradual increase and a glorious consummation. So is it with His kingdom in the world, a kingdom which came not with observation; so is it with His kingdom in any single heart; there, too, the word of Christ falls like a slight mustard seed, seeming to promise little, but effecting, if allowed to grow, mighty and marvellous results.

III. There is prophecy, too, in these words. Christ's kingdom shall attract multitudes by the shelter and protection which it offers,—shelter, as it has often proved, from worldly oppression, shelter from the great power of the devil. Itself a tree of life whose leaves are for medicine and whose fruit for food, all who need the satisfying of their soul's hunger, all who need the healing of their soul's hearts, shall betake themselves to it.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 107.

REFERENCES: xiii. 31, 32.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 128; S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, pp. 1, 17; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 90; J. R. Macduff, *Parables of the Lake*, p. 102.

**Chap. xiii., vers. 31-33.**

THE Kingdom of God.

I. Look first at the external progress of the kingdom as illustrated by the growth of the mustard seed. It is ever important to remember that Christianity, at first like a small grain of seed, spread throughout the world, until the nations of the earth came to flock like birds to its protecting shelter, by no aid except its own inherent spiritual power. There was nothing to help it in the character of its early teachers. There was nothing to make its progress easy in the conditions of the Jewish and Gentile worlds. People say sometimes that they

find it hard to believe the miracles on which Christianity is based—surely the grandest, greatest miracle is the existence of Christianity itself. If, then, there was nothing in the outside world to which it appealed, nothing in the natural hearts of men which it came to satisfy, how are we to account for the spread of Christ's kingdom except by attributing to it some spiritual power of its own? Does not the second parable, that of the leaven, come in here to explain to us the secret of those earlier teachers' spiritual power? The grain of leaven, put into their hearts, when first the Master called them, gradually permeated and transfused their entire nature. The whole man was leavened. The early teachers of Christianity used to describe this leaven by the word "faith." To us faith has become too much merely the cry of a party, the shibboleth of a sect. To an apostle it meant everything. It meant an intensely personal love for Christ. It meant the entire absorption of all the heart's deepest feelings in devotion to Him. This it was—this burning love flaming in their hearts, this principle of enthusiasm transforming their lives—which made these weak men strong. The outward kingdom grew and increased, because the invisible kingdom so wrought in the hearts of disciples that their whole nature was leavened by it.

T. T. SHORE, *Some Difficulties of Belief*, p. 189.

REFERENCES: xiii. 31-33.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 167. xiii. 32, 33.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 73.

Chap. xiii., ver. 33.—"Another parable spake He unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

IN the mustard seed we saw the kingdom growing great by its inherent vitality; in the leaven we see it growing great by a contagious influence. There the increase was obtained by development from within; here, by acquisitions from without. The kingdom grows great by permeating in secret through the masses, changing them gradually into its own nature, and appropriating them to itself.

I. Christ, the Son of God, became man and dwelt among us. Behold the piece of leaven that has been plunged into the dead mass of the world. The whole is not leavened yet, but the germ has been introduced.

II. Converted men, women, and children are let into openings of corrupt humanity and hidden in its heart. There they cannot lie still; they stir and effervesce, and inoculate the por-

tions with which they are in closest contact. In this respect the lesson is the same with that which is taught in those of the short parables of Jesus: "Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth."

III. The light of faith, when it is hidden in the heart, spreads like leaven through the man, occupying and assimilating all the faculties of his nature and all the course of his life. The whole lump of the individual must be leavened, as well as the whole lump of the world. Christ will not be satisfied until He gets every man in the world for His own and every part of each. In the new creature, as in the new world, "dwelleth righteousness." That which is now laid on the consciences of Christians as a law will yet emerge from their life as a fact: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 111.

THE Leaven.

We may understand our Lord as describing in this parable either the influence of the Gospel on the world and its final universal manifestation, or the influence and operation of Divine grace on those in whose hearts the Spirit of God has lodged it. The parable may be applied either way, but we prefer the latter.

I. The woman takes the leaven to lay it not on, but in, the meal, where, working from within outwards, it changes the whole substance from the centre to the surface. It is through a corresponding change that the man goes to whom the Spirit of God communicates His grace. It is hidden in the heart. The change begins there; the outward reformation not preparing the way for regeneration, but springing from it, growing out of it as a tree grows out of its seed, or a stream flows out of its spring.

II. Suppose that the woman, taking, instead of leaven, a stone, a piece of granite, a common pebble, or even a precious jewel, any metal such as gold or silver, or any like inert and inactive substance, had placed that in the heart of the meal, the meal had remained the same, changing neither to stone nor metal. But so soon as leaven is embedded in its substance, a change immediately ensues, a process of fermentation is set agoing, and, extending from within outwards, goes on till, by a law of nature, the whole lump is leavened. Neither art nor nature could supply a better simile of the grace of God than this.

An active element, so soon as it is lodged in the heart it begins to work; nor ceases to extend its holy influence over the affections and habits, the inward and outward character, till it has moved and changed the whole man.

III. It is said of the meal in which the woman hid the leaven, that "the whole," not a portion of it, large or small, "was leavened." The apostle bring out the same diffusive character of this element when he says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Even so, teaching us not to despise the day of small things, a little grace lodged in the heart spreads till it sanctifies the whole man. These three characters of grace form three excellent tests of character and of the genuineness of our religion.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables read in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 12.

I. THE power which is to raise man must come from without.
II. The leaven must be lodged and work within.
III. The leaven has a penetrative and diffusive power.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 152.

Chap. xiii., ver. 33 (with Luke xiii., vers. 20, 21).

THE Leaven.

This parable, like that of the mustard seed, relates to the marvellous increase of the kingdom of God; but while the last sets forth its outward visible manifestation, this declares its hidden working, its mysterious influence on that world which on all sides it touches.

I. By the leaven we are to understand the word of the kingdom, which word, in its highest sense, Christ Himself was. As the mustard seed, out of which a mighty tree should unfold itself, was the least of all seeds, so, too, the leaven is something apparently of slight account, but at the same time mighty in operation.

II. The leaven which is mingled with the lump, which acts on and coalesces with it, is at the same time different from it, for the woman took it from elsewhere to mingle it therein; and even such is the Gospel—a kingdom not of this world, not the unfolding of any powers which already existed therein, a kingdom not rising, as the secular kingdoms out "of the earth" (Dan. vii. 17), but a new power brought into the world from above; not a philosophy, which men have imagined, but a revelation which God has revealed. The Gospel of Christ was a new and quickening power, cast into the midst of an old

and dying world; a centre of life, round which all the moral energies which still survived, and all which itself should awaken, might form and gather, by the help of which the world might constitute itself anew. This leaven is not merely mingled with, but *hidden* in, the mass which it renewed. For the true renovation, that which God effects, is ever from the inward to the outward; it begins in the inner spiritual world, though it does not end there; for it fails not to bring about, in good time a mighty change also in the outward and visible world.

III. The promise of the parable has hitherto been realized only in a very imperfect measure; nor can we consider these words, "till the whole was leavened," as less than a prophecy of the final complete triumph of the Gospel, that it will diffuse itself through all nations and purify and ennoble all life.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 114.

REFERENCES: xiii. 33.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 340; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 64; J. R. Macduff, *Parables of the Lake*, p. 121; R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 133; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 264. xiii. 38.—H. Allon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 227.

**Chap. xiii., ver. 43.—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear."**

THE Glory of the Righteous.

I. Its present concealment. (1) We find the first reason for this concealment in the nature of the only true righteousness in man. Our faith is as yet only the germ of a new creation, and often it is cradled in tears and made strong by storms. Slowly, very slowly, through struggle and through storm, are we changed by faith into righteous men; and who then can marvel if, amid that life long conflict, our glory is but dimly seen? (2) We find a second reason for this concealment in the discipline by which the righteous are perfected. The necessary discipline of their faith inevitably conceals their glory. The world's eye sees little beauty in the crown of thorns, and is unable to perceive the grandeur of the faith that accepts the sorrow of the heaviest cross for the sake of the Christ it cannot see.

II. Its future manifestation. The present concealment will pass away; the germ of faith will ripen into eternal glory The veil is over us; we do not see what royal souls are being formed by sorrow here. But in the end it shall be seen that all feelings of pain and weakness, solitude and weariness, have a corresponding weight of joy.

III. Its mighty lessons. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." (1) Hear it, slothful, dreaming, forgetful Christian. You, whose heart is growing cold and whose prayer is still, hear it, and awake from your sleep, that "Christ may give you light." (2) Hear it, earnest, struggling, determined soul. Struggle onwards still. The morning is breaking, the day is at hand, when thou shalt shine like the sun in the kingdom of thy Father. (3) Hear it, unbeliever. There is a righteousness for thee. Renounce thine own works and thy self-will, receive the righteousness of Christ, and thou too shalt shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 327.

**Chap. xiii., ver. 44.—"Treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth."**

THE Treasure Twice Hidden.

I. How tender, how intelligent, how considerate, is Jesus Christ! How mercifully He recognizes what some, speaking in His name, make so light of—the difficulty of believing! He says the treasure of treasures is a hid treasure. It has been for ages buried in that common-looking field which is the world—whatever the world be for each of us; the world of circumstance, and the world of business, and the world of chance and change, and the world of thought and feeling and passion and longing. Under all that crust and surface of ordinary living there lies, deeply buried, utterly hidden, its very existence unguessed and unsuspected, this treasure of treasures—a Gospel of life and immortality. Christ says it is hidden; and the history of eighteen centuries, honestly written, honestly read, says so too.

II. The treasure is hid, and the man who finds it hides it again. Suppose that by one of His unsearchable influences God has brought a man to what Scripture calls "the obedience of faith." This is the critical moment at which man may say, "Publish," but at which Christ says, "Hide." (1) The man in the parable hides till he has purchased. And you—can you be quite sure that the treasure is yours? Hide at least till you have sold all and bought the field. This must take time. (2) Do not, by word or sign, imply anything more than that you, as you trust, have got a truer and more real conviction than you once had of the meaning of your Christian standing and profession. Do not for a moment assume that your brother who has not said the same thing is not equally and alike a Christian. (3) Say nothing publicly about your new experience. Be only

ashamed that you had it not earlier. Hide the treasure, first of all, in your heart. This hiding will be another word for the best possible kind of showing. The light that shines through is the true light. Let the law of charity, and the law of purity, and the law of reverence reign in you everywhere.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 268.

I. THE blessings of the Gospel are compared to a treasure. Lifting the "poor from the dust, and the needy from the dunghill to set him with princes," they introduce him to the presence of the Divine Majesty and the palace of the Great King; to the society of angels and the communion of saints; to the general assembly of those high-born and first-born, compared with whom, in point of worth or dignity or lofty and enduring glory, your kings are but worms of the dust.

II. The blessings of the Gospel are compared to a hid treasure. Within the two boards of the poor man's Bible is a greater wealth of happiness, of honour, of pleasure, of true peace, than Australia hides in the gold of all her mines. That could not buy the pardon of any of the thousand criminals whom a country, weary of their crimes, once cast upon her distant shores; but here is what satisfies a justice stricter than man's, and procures the forgiveness of sins which the stoutest heart may tremble to think of.

III. The treasure was found without being sought. Even so, while some after a long search for happiness and their soul's good, in fulfilment of the promise, "Seek, and ye shall find," get in Jesus Christ the treasure of this parable and the pearl of the next, others find a Saviour without seeking Him. They burst at once into a state of grace; they stumble on salvation, if I may say so, as this man on the treasure hid in the field. They are converted, and it is a great surprise to them, what neither they nor any one else expected.

IV. Note the conduct of the finder. (1) He hid the treasure. In hiding the treasure till he had made himself owner of the field, he took the surest way of making it his own, and expressed, better than any words could do, its value in his eyes. By this parable the Saviour calls men to leave no stone unturned, no pains untaken, no anxiety unfelt, no prayer unsaid, to make His treasures theirs. (2) He parts with all for this treasure. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables read in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 198.

THE Treasure Hid in a Field.

This parable is one which sets forth not so much the manner of the growth of the kingdom of heaven, as the extreme value to mankind of the knowledge of that kingdom. Two things our Saviour asserts concerning His Gospel: (1) that it is a treasure; (2) that it is a treasure in some sense hidden.

I. Note the effect stated in the parable to be produced upon the mind of the man who has discovered the Gospel treasure. He goes and sells all that he has and buys the field—conduct which shows that he has no doubt of being repaid for all that he spends in buying the field; he sells all that he has, not that he may become a beggar, but because he feels sure that he will get back his property tenfold—conduct which shows faith too, because the treasure for which he barters all that he has is still hidden; he has not seen it all, but he is sure from what he has seen that infinite treasure is there; and moreover it shows energy, because as soon as the man becomes aware of the existence of the treasure he appears to leave no effort untried, even to the selling of all his substance, to make himself master of the treasure.

II. But does the Lord intend to describe merely what *ought* to take place with reference to His Gospel, or to describe what usually *does* take place? I think that if we look into the history of what the Gospel has done, either in ancient or in modern times, we shall perceive that though in many cases it has fallen upon deaf ears, and so has remained for ever a hidden treasure, yet there is quite enough to support the description of its character which Christ gives in the text; there is enough to show that Christ was describing, not merely an imaginary picture which would never be realized on account of the blindness and obstinacy of men, but a picture of which very many admirable copies may be found in all ages of the Church. Examples may be found (1) in the case of St. Paul; (2) in the history of the early converts to Christianity; (3) even in the extravagances to which the profession of the Christian faith soon gave rise. Let us remember that a too enthusiastic view in a matter of this kind is a safer, wiser, healthier view than one which is too indifferent and cold. The kingdom of heaven is treasure,—treasure which may be found if we seek for it, and which, if it be worth seeking for at all, is worth all the labour and sacrifice and cost which any of us can spend in the search

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series p. 227.

THE Hid Treasure.

The kingdom of God is not merely a general, it is also an individual and personal thing. It is not merely a tree overshadowing the earth, or leaven leavening the world, but each man must have it for himself, and make it his own by a distinct act of his own will. He cannot be a Christian without knowing it. There will be a personal appropriation of the benefit; and we have the history of this in the two parables which follow.

I. The circumstance which supplies the groundwork of this first parable—namely, the finding of a concealed treasure—is of much more frequent occurrence in an insecure state of society, such as in almost all ages has prevailed in the East, than happily it is with us. Often a man, abandoning the regular pursuits of industry, will devote himself to treasure-seeking, in the hope of growing, through some happy chance, rich of a sudden. The contrast, however, between this parable and the following will not allow us to assume the finder here to have been in search of the treasure; he rather stumbles upon it, strikes it with plough or spade, unawares, and thinking of no such thing, probably while engaged as a hireling in cultivating the field of another.

II. The field represents the outer visible Church, as distinguished from the inward spiritual, with which the treasure will then agree.

III. The treasure which a man hath found he hideth. This cannot mean that he who has discovered the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Jesus Christ will desire to keep his knowledge to himself, since rather he will feel himself, as he never did before, a debtor to all men, to make all partakers of the benefit. If he hide the treasure, this hiding will be, not lest another should find, but lest he himself should lose it. In the first moments that the truth is revealed to a soul, there may well be a tremulous fear lest the blessing found should, by some means or other, escape again. The anxiety that it may not do so, the jealous precautions for this end taken, would seem to be the truth signified by this re-concealment of the found treasure.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 122.

I. THERE is a treasure placed within our reach in this world.
II. The treasure is hidden. It is near and yet out of sight.
III. The hidden treasure is at last found.

IV. The finder parts with all in order that he may acquire the treasure.

V. Joy is an essential element in the case.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of the Lord*, p. 128.

REFERENCES: xiii. 44.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,074; R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 139; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 68; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 396.

**Chap. xiii. vers. 44-46.**

IT appears to me that there are four great tests of value.

I. The first test of value is rarity. A thing is valuable according to its scarceness. Apply this test to religion. It is holiness and happiness—rare things in this world, look for them where you will. The most unique and precious thing under heaven is the religion which will make you holy and happy, which, as John Bunyan says, is only to be had at one store-house, and if you apply there you can get it without either money or price.

II. Take another test of value—the verdict of a competent authority. A picture has hung on a cottage wall for years, an unvalued heirloom, that hangs there simply because it is its accustomed place. There comes in one who knows, and he uses means to take away the canker and the rust of time, and unburies a patch of subtle colour that lies beneath, and he says in a moment, "Why, that is a Rembrandt," and in a moment the verdict of a competent authority gives it a value that it never possessed before. True religion can stand the test of the verdict of a competent authority.

III. Not only rarity, not only the verdict of a competent authority, but durability, is an important test of value. I need not tell you how long religion will last. Let the white-haired patriarch get up and preach; let the man who has tried it for half a century get up and tell us how he finds his Lord, and His faithfulness to cheer him as he passes along the lanes of life. Religion will stand the test, you may depend upon it, of durability.

IV. There is the test of adaptation. Does it perfectly meet my need? What do I want—I who am a poor sinner, I who have grieved my God, I who know of an eternal doom to the transgressor, I who am overpowered and oppressed by the cares and trials and tribulations of my life and cannot dry a single tear that falls, I who have an eternity of destiny of

some sort—what do I want? Sin-stained, condemned as I am, God knows I want a Saviour most of all. Thank God, He is found, and He hangs upon the cross, and because He died I shall live. He is adapted to my highest and deepest and grandest emergency.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 360.

REFERENCES: xiii. 44-46.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 167; M. Dods, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 35; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 256; J. R. Macduff, *Parables of the Lake*, p. 139.

Chap. xiii., vers. 45, 46.—"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

THE true lessons of this parable are briefly these:—

I. It represents the experience, not of a careless or a profane man, who stumbles suddenly upon the Gospel when he was in in search of other things, but of one who is awakened, and has begun to seek the true religion, endeavouring to add attainment to attainment sincerely, according to his light. His conscience is uneasy. He has tried the old specific, "All these have I kept from my youth up;" but it no longer avails to soothe his spirit. "What lack I yet?" burst from his breast in broken sighs. There is truth in the man, though not wisdom. He is honestly seeking the way, and the Lord leads him. He is seeking, he shall find.

II. It represents the unparalleled, inconceivable richness of God's mercy in Christ, taking away all a sinner's sin, and bestowing on him freely the place and privileges of a dear child.

III. It represents that these riches lie, not in an accumulation of goodly attainments, such as men are wont to traffic in, but in one undivided, indivisible, hitherto unknown and unimagined treasure.

IV. It represents that the inquirer, the instant he discovers that this one incomparable, all-comprehending treasure exists and is offered to him, cheerfully, eagerly, unhesitatingly gives away all that he possesses in order to acquire it. That is, he gives all for Christ, and then enjoys all in Christ.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 144.

THE Pearl of Great Price.

Note: I. The persons represented by this merchant. Differen characters, different classes of sinners, are represented as being

saved in the two parables of the hid treasure and the pearl of great price. For examples of these, let me select two remarkable men—Colonel Gardiner and John Bunyan. Gardiner's was a sudden and remarkable conversion. In salvation he found as much as the man in the treasure which his ploughshare brought to light, what he never sought nor expected. Bunyan, on the other hand, seeking the pardon of sin, a purer life, and a holier heart, had been a merchant seeking "goodly pearls;" and, in his case, the seeker became the finder.

II. The pearl of great price. As all which the merchant sought in acquiring many goodly pearls was found in one—one precious, peerless gem—Jesus teaches us that the soul finds in Himself all it feels the want of and has been seeking in other ways—peace with God and peace of conscience, a clean heart and a renewed mind, hope in death and a heaven of glory after it.

III. How this pearl was obtained. It was not bestowed as a gift. On the contrary, the merchantman, trading in goodly pearls, bought it at the price of all he had. Though we cannot, in the ordinary sense of the term, buy salvation, no man is saved but he who gives up his sins for Christ, takes up his cross, and, denying himself daily, follows Jesus.

IV. Some lessons taught by this figure of a merchant. (1) It teaches us to make religion our chief pursuit. (2) It teaches us to guard against deception. (3) It teaches us to examine our accounts with God.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables read in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 229.

REFERENCES: xiii. 45, 46.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,424; R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 142; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 133; M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 208; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,749. xiii. 46.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 123; C. J. Vaughan, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 21. xiii. 47, 48.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 157. xiii. 47-50.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 179; W. Arnot, *Parables of our Lord*, p. 160; J. R. Macduff, *Parables of the Lake*, p. 180.

**Chap. xiii., vers. 51, 52.—"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things?" etc.**

I. THE comparison is between the householder and the disciples. If they understood these few and seemingly simple analogies which He had unfolded to them, they were instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. Reflect first on the importance to us of this declaration. Jesus had given these men no creeds, in systematic shape. He had not given them doctrines, in holding which

they should be models of Christian orthodoxy. He had told them a few stories taken from every-day life and the familiar occupations of the husbandman and the fisherman. All that we have learned of any worth has been by the simplest of analogies—by parable, that is to say—and by the same path as the simplest and least learned of our kind. Our Lord Himself tells us that the instructed scribe is he who has mastered these few parables. These disciples, understanding and living upon the truth, were in the position of owners of treasure. But why of things new and old?

II. In the first place, all truth is of necessity old as well as new. The truths Christ taught were only new truths, because men from sin and neglect had overlooked them.

III. Again, as things new are in reality old, so things old—the things of the Spirit of God—never become obsolete, take new life, and are seen in new developments day by day.

IV. Every man's experience is a treasure-house of old and new things, by which it is allowed him to profit. The past is a precious possession of every one of us. There is a wisdom of the past which we are apt to underrate because it is old, forgetting that truth is neither old nor new. There have been truth and falsehood in antagonism from the beginning. Every day and hour they wrestle in our souls as they contended in our first parents, and we pass our lives, now conquering, now being defeated; and our help is in the truth which does not roll round in earth's diurnal course, and is unaffected by earthly change. A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 254.

REFERENCES: xiii. 51-58.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 272. xiii. 52.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 184; *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 177; R. Thomas, *Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 193; W. Gladden, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 15; *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 97; R. Lee, *Sermons*, p. 451. xiii. 54.—H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 46.

Chap. xiii., ver. 58.—"And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

THE heathen conception of God is that of an irresistible force, directed by an irresponsible will. And if we examine our own feelings regarding God and the spirit which pervades our prayers, we shall perhaps find that some such thoughts of God's nature linger dimly and undefined in our own ideas; also many well-sounding phrases about "the future being entirely in God's hands," are used too frequently, not only as an expression of humble dependence upon our Father, but as mildly suggesting a certain amount of irresponsibility and of

almost absolute impotence upon our part. Because the omnipotent God *could* act independently of the will and energy of man, we are too apt, practically, to conclude that He does so. Now everything alike in the works of God which we call nature, and in the teaching of the Scriptures, shows us that God does not do so; and hence arises the solemn fact of man's responsibility.

I. Everywhere the Divine principle of co-operation meets us. Take, for example, in the kingdom of nature, the various processes of agriculture. In these our direct dependence upon matters entirely beyond our own control is brought before us with a vividness and distinctness which cannot fail to impress us. Yet beyond our control as are the actual results, from another point of view the produce of the earth is entirely dependent upon man's labour. The rain may descend in full and genial blessing, the sun may shine in quickening and ripening power, and no blade shoot above the earth nor ear ripen into golden glory, if man has not ploughed the earth and scattered the seed.

II. Pass from the world of matter to the higher world of mind, and here the same principle meets us. God has not forced knowledge upon mankind; man's persistent devotion and untiring energy are necessary to its gradual attainment. And so in religion,—transcendently important as it is in mankind, God has not bestowed upon religious truth an irresistible power; her progress results from man's zeal and devotion in her service. It is a solemn fact that the spread of the Gospel is, in a large measure, dependent upon us.

III. And in the higher sphere of individual spiritual life this same principle holds true. God does not force men into faith. Religion is a Divine and spiritual force, but not irresistible—or rather, not independently operative. The faithful, trustful, loving spirit in us is needful still to the performance of her mighty works in ourselves and in others.

T. T. SHORE, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 71.

REFERENCES: xiii. 58.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. i., p. 324.

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Chap. xiv., vers. 9, 10.—"And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and for them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison."

IT is quite clear that, in spite of his promise, Herod had no right to behead John the Baptist. He had no right to make such a

promise, to begin with; and when he had made it, he was for that reason bound to break it. Nor is it difficult to define the principle which governs all these cases. If a man has no right to do a thing, his promising to do it does not give him the right. Such a promise is void, to begin with.

I. Conflicts of duty are, no doubt, sometimes quite real, and even a very good man does not see clearly which of the lines to follow. But far, far more common are the conflicts of duty in which right is all on one side, and only the appearance of right on the other. What, for instance, can be commoner than the false law of fellowship, which makes any one who has joined in wrong unwilling to do right, because it would seem like deserting his companions? While he is putting off amendment for his companions' sake, he could not do them a greater service than to commence at once, and give them courage to do what they are longing to do, but dare not. But he does not see this, and he will not be allowed to see it; and so he puts this imaginary barrier between himself and his duty, and has a sort of sense that his conscience is in doubt, and that if he is not doing one duty he is doing another.

II. As a rule, these perplexities only beset those who begin by wrongdoing. All wrongdoing has a tendency to call for other wrongdoing, either as its natural and proper sequel, or as its only protection. Herod would most certainly not have had to choose between breaking his word and putting John the Baptist to death, if he had not begun by illegally putting the prophet in prison. The conflict, in fact, is one of the sequels of previous faults, and one of the severest punishments. And if we would avoid the temptation of such a conflict, we must watch our steps.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 282.

REFERENCES: xiv. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 335. xiv. 1-14.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 296. xiv. 2.—T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees*, p. 133.

Chap. xiv., vers. 10-12.—"And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison," etc.

I. IF you consider the manner of John the Baptist's death, as Scripture brings it before us, I cannot help thinking that at first sight it will seem to you rather disappointing. The death of John the Baptist is as nearly as possible what we should have expected it not to be; he becomes a martyr, but without any of the glories which light up a martyr's death; he is shut

up by Herod in a castle; there he lingers on month by month, until at length a wicked woman asks for his head, and Herod sends an executioner to murder him in prison.

II. At the time of John's death he had *finished his work.* His work was not to preach the Gospel, but to point to, and prepare the way for, Him who did preach it; and if Christ was now come, what more need of John? You may say, perhaps, that it was but a poor reward for John the Baptist, that after he had laboured earnestly as the messenger of Christ, he should be shut up in prison, and allowed to drag on a weary existence there, and at last lose his life to please Herodias. This is perfectly true, if you look at the matter from a merely human point of view. But the question is, not whether a man thinks it time to leave this world, but whether he has done God's work in it. The lesson He would teach us is, that we should give to Him the prime of our faculties, and consecrate to His service our health and strength, and then leave it to Him, without a murmur or a sigh, to determine, as seems best to Him, how we shall leave this world when our work is done.

III. St. John was the forerunner of Christ; so far, we cannot be exactly like him. But in what spirit did he go before Christ? This is really the question of questions. The spirit in which he went before Christ was that of simple obedience and bold determination to do God's will. He has taught us that we are to do our duty simply, boldly, and sincerely, as in the fear of God. We are to act as believing that God's eye is upon us; that He knows our acts, our words, our thoughts; that we are His and not our own; that we have a great work to do for Him, and a short day in which to do it, and a long night before us in which no work can be done.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 5th series, p. 248.

REFERENCE: xiv. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 45.

Chap. xiv., ver. 12 (with chap. xxviii., ver. 8).—"And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus."

THE grave of the dead John, and the grave of the living Jesus. The grave of John was the end of a "school." The grave of Jesus was the beginning of a Church. Why? The only answer is the message which the women brought back from the empty sepulchre on that Easter Day: "The Lord is risen." The whole history of the Christian Church, and even its very existence, is unintelligible, except on the supposition of the resurrection. But for that the fate of John's disciples would

have been the fate of Christ; they would have melted away into the mass of the nation, and at most there would have been one more petty Galilean sect, that would have lived on for a generation, and died out when the last of his companions died.

I. The first point to be considered is that the conduct of Christ's disciples after His death was exactly the opposite of what might have been expected. (1) They held together. The natural thing for them to do would have been to disband; for the one bond was gone. (2) Their conceptions of Jesus underwent a remarkable change on His death. The death that should have cast a deeper shadow of incomprehensibleness over His strange and lofty claims poured a new light upon them, which made them all plain and clear. (3) Another equally unlikely sequel of the death of Jesus is the unmistakable moral transformation effected on the disciples. Timorous and tremulous before, something or other touched them into altogether new boldness and self-possession.

II. The disciples' immediate belief in the resurrection furnishes a reasonable, and the only reasonable, explanation of the facts. There is no better historical evidence of a fact than the existence of an institution built upon it—coeval with it.

III. Such a belief could not have originated or maintained itself unless it had been true.

IV. The message of Easter is a message to us as truly as it was to the heavy-hearted unbelieving men that first received it. The one proof of a life beyond the grave is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore let us be glad with the gladness of men plucked from a dark abyss of doubt and uncertainty, and planted on the rock of solid certainty.

A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 159.

I. OUR text tells of a death. It was a sudden and violent death. It was a solitary death. No congenial spirit was with the departing, to cheer him with a thought of hope or with a breath of prayer. The life itself went out in inactivity. It might seem, man might call it, a failure. Its latest days were its least brilliant.

II. His disciples came and took up the body and buried it. They who might not minister to the life shall minister to the death. No jealousy, no tyranny, survives death; so now the disciples are free to come and take the body. There is scarcely one tie in life stronger or more indestructible than that which binds the scholar to his master, if each be what he ought to be.

If indeed the relation has been at once paternal and brotherly and ministerial, cemented by mutual love, and consecrated by a common love for One in whom each has his being, then the co-existence is delightful beyond words, and the separation in death bitter—only not to despair. How much more then this discipleship to one actually sent of God—to one who was the kinsman, the friend, the harbinger of Jesus. Scarcely any funeral was ever like that one,—the surprise, the shock, the anguish, the indignation, yet also, let us believe, the thanksgiving of heart and soul which accompanied the laying of that still young life to its latest and only satisfying rest in the enjoyment of a world where doubt is not, where God is. When we think of it we can almost place ourselves beside that tomb, and then go straight with these mourners and tell Jesus.

III. Unhappy that sorrow which cannot tell itself to Jesus. There are such sorrows. The burning fever of passion, whether in the form of baffled lust or dissatisfied ambition or self-defeated speculation, will not, scarcely can, go, quite as it is, to tell Jesus. And yet if it would, it would not be cast out. Little do we know, the best of us, of the largeness of that heart. We, who feel ourselves grieved and wearied, we scarce know why, by the search for something which never comes, by the perpetual baffling of hope undefined and effort misdirected, we are the men sought. Part with the dead lord, with the usurper of the heart's heart, bury him out of thy sight, and come and tell Jesus.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words of Hope*, p. 233.

REFERENCES: xiv. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 41. xiv. 13, 14.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 266. xiv. 13-21.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 120; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 291.

Chap. xiv., ver. 14.—"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick."

A GREAT Multitude a Sad Sight.

I. The Redeemer's reason for compassionating the great multitude is a reason of universal application. It was a reason for feeling compassion for that assemblage that day in Palestine; it is a reason for feeling compassion for any assemblage whatever. Christ's pity was not moved by any of those accidental and temporary causes which exist at some times and in some places, and not elsewhere. Sinfulness and the need of a Saviour are things which press, whether felt or not, upon

all human beings. That spiritual malady of sin from which the Great Physician alone can save us is one that is wide as the human race. He sees in it the weightiest reason for compassionating any mortal, through every stage of his existence—from the first quiet slumber in the cradle to the rigid silence in the shroud.

II. The Redeemer's reason for feeling compassion toward the multitude was the strongest reason for doing so. When we think what sin is and what sin tends to, we cannot but feel how rightly the Saviour judged. For sin is indeed man's sorest disease and man's greatest unhappiness. And sin, if unpardoned, leads to death—death spiritual and eternal. A sinful soul is a soul stricken with the worst of diseases, leading to the most awful of deaths. It was because Christ looked on into the unseen world, and discerned the wrath in which sin unpardoned would land the soul, that He felt so deep a compassion as He looked on the great multitude gathered in the Eastern desert.

III. If Jesus thought the sight of a great multitude a sad sight, if He could not look upon the multitude but with compassion, it must have been because He could not look but with compassion on each individual soul in the multitude. And as that multitude was a fair sample of the human race, it follows that Christ feels that there is something for Him to pity as He looks on each of us—on each separate human being. Let us be clothed with humility. It is the right frame of spirit for beings such as you and me. Let us go humbly to the foot of the Cross, and, feeling our helplessness, let us patiently wait till the kind Saviour shall look upon us with compassion and take away our sins.

**A. K. H. B.,** ***The Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson,*** **1st series, p. 142.**

**Chap. xiv., vers. 15-21.**

Jesus and His Bounty.

I. The problem of the disciples. The desert place, the night, and the multitude without food, presented a problem that might well constitute reason for anxiety to any that were of a sympathetic nature. The disciples were prepared for the desert themselves, with or without food; but to be there with five thousand men, besides women and children, and all hungering, was a very different matter. There was no provision in their faith for so unexpected an event. Their advice was to

send the multitude away to provide for themselves. There is an easy way out of present difficulties which, if taken, may lead to difficulties in the future which may be of a more unyielding kind than any which beset the present. Great confusion might ensue by sending the multitude hungering away. The disciples seem to have forgotten (1) that the people had followed their Master, not them; (2) that the Master knew as much and more of the multitude than they did; (3) that the Master was moved with compassion towards the people.

II. The solution of the Master. "Give ye them to eat," said the Master. The command seemed extravagant; but they knew that it had not been His habit to gather in where He had not scattered abroad. It made them feel how inadequate they were, with the little they had, to obey it. They had only five loaves and two fishes, do as they would, and with a multitude to feed. The loaves were, however, just what the people needed. We have all some little which, if wisely used, may be of benefit to our fellows. Whatever of good and holy things we have should be holily and usefully employed. The two talents are as valuable within their sphere as five are within theirs. The Master took the five loaves and two fishes from the disciples, and manifested His great power through that which they gave Him. He brought them into the fellowship of His mystery. Our first condition of usefulness is to take the little we have to Christ, if only we have the little. And we shall find that if we have taken whatever of thought and feeling and opportunity we have, and if all have been blessed by Him, that that which is blessed by Him is equal to all that life's occasion demands; but without being blessed our loaves remain five, and the people, however frantic our effort, continue hungering.

J. O. DAVIES, *Sunrise on the Soul*, p. 321.

REFERENCES: xiv. 15-21.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 304; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 109. xiv. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 453. xiv. 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 139. xiv. 19, 20.—J. Shaw, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 76; W. Gresley, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 209. xiv. 22-26.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 312. xiv. 22-33.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 128; J. Hawker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 168. xiv. 23.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 327; Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 326.

Chap. xiv., ver. 24.—"The wind was contrary."

I. VERY evidently the first thing here suggested is that the way of duty is not always easy. In saying that I do not allude to

the inner difficulties which we have frequently to overcome before we enter upon the path of obedience, but rather to those hindrances which come upon us from without, while we are honestly trying to go forward in the course which, believing it to be commanded us by God, we have begun. Let any one set out to do anything positive or aggressive for Christ, and all experience declares that before he has gone far he will have to face a contrary wind.

II. Now, what shall we say to sustain ourselves amid an experience like this? (1) This, at least, we may take to ourselves for comfort—namely, that we are not responsible for the wind. That is a matter outside of us and beyond our control, and for all such things we are not to be blamed. The contrary wind is in God's providence, and is to be made the best of; nay, so soon as we recognize that it is in God's providence, we will make the best of it. (2) The attention required for bearing up against the contrary wind may take us, for the time being, out of the way of some subtle temptation. In general, all such adverse providences have operated in keeping us nearer the mercy-seat, and in leading us to depend more implicitly—or, as the hymn has put it, to "lean" more "hardly"—on the support of the Lord. (3) There may be much in contending with a contrary wind to prepare us for higher service in the cause of Christ. Our Lord withdrew to the mountain to give the disciples a foretaste of what should come when He went up to heaven; and I have a firm conviction that much of that persistence of the apostles in the face of persecution, which so strongly impresses us as we read the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, had its root in the remembrance of what they had learned in this night's contending with adverse winds on the Galilean lake. This was one of their first experiments in walking alone, and it helped to steady them afterwards. (4) As we bend to our oars while the wind is contrary, we may take to ourselves the comfort that the Lord Jesus is closely watching us.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds and other Sermons*, p. 7.

REFERENCES: xiv. 24.—T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 116. xiv. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 957. xiv. 27.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 1; J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 203; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 86; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 215. xiv. 28.—Spurgeon, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 22. xiv. 28, 29.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 95: J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. iii., p. 221; J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 144.

Chap. xiv., ver. 30.—"Beginning to sink."

THERE are three conditions of soul: some think they are sinking and are not; some are sinking and do not know; some are sinking and do know it—know it truly and miserably.

I. Let me gather up the steps towards the sinking. An emotional state, with abrupt and strong reactions; a self-exaltation; a breaking out under a good and religious aspect of an old infirmity and sin; a disproportion between the act and the frame of mind in which the act was done; neglect of ordinary means with not sufficient calculation of difficulties; a devious eye; a want of concentration; a regard to circumstances more than to the Power which wields them; a certain inward separation from God; a human measurement; a descent to a fear—unnecessary, dishonouring fear; depression; a sense of perishing; beginning to sink.

II. Let us see the escape. In his humiliation and fear and emptiness, the eye of St. Peter, which had wandered in the pride of his first confident marching, went back to Christ. It was the mark that he was a child of God still. It was the mark in the judgment-hall; it was the mark now; it is the mark everywhere. You who feel that you have sunk and are sinking, go back again, and let Jesus be to you, and you be to Jesus, as it once was. Those declining steps and sinking affections want the Saviour more than ever, and He is the Saviour still. The same eye is towards you, as loving, as gentle, as affectionate and kind. Return—away from every wind that blows and every wave that beats—away from the gulfs that yawn, and the depths that will swallow you up—away from your own guilty self—look to Jesus.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 154.

REFERENCES: xiv. 30.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 14. xiv. 31.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., No. 246, vol. xxxi., No. 1,856; A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 174; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 41. xiv. 36.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 382.

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Chap. xv., vers. 5, 6.—"But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free," etc.

I. THERE ought to be no conflict between the Divine and social claims. The family has its claims; society has its claims; God has His claims, and they are all righteous. They are al.

on the same line of rectitude. There ought to be no conflict between them. This conflict exists among us because the claims of society are often unjust. God's claims are never unjust.

II. Those who most devoutly recognize the Divine claims are the most faithful in their discharge of social claims.

III. The discharge of the one kind of claims should not be used as a pretext for the neglect of the others.

J. OWEN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 260.

REFERENCES: xv. 1-20.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 79; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 321. xv. 3-9.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 297. xv. 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 22; Durrant, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 241.

Chap. xv., ver. 7.—"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you."

THESE words call us to look at three points, the first of which is the importance of plain speaking on all questions affecting the interests of truth. Jesus Christ was pre-eminently a plain speaker. He did not round His sentences for the purpose of smoothing His way. When He had occasion to administer rebuke, or to point out the errors of those who were round about Him, He spoke keenly, incisively, with powerful effect upon the mind and conscience of those who heard Him. In the text He calls certain persons hypocrites. He does not say behind their backs that they were hypocrites, but He looked straight at them and right through them, and said, "Ye hypocrites." If we had more such plain speaking it would be an advantage to us all.

I. Two things are required in the plain speaker. (1) Personal rightness. "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." (2) Moral fearlessness. Our courage is not always equal to our convictions. We know the right, and yet dare not pursue it. The right word suggests itself to our lips, and our lips dare not pronounce it.

II. The second point to which the text calls our attention is the far-seeing spirit of prophecy. Jesus Christ said to the men of His day, "Esaias prophesied of *you*." Observe the unity of the moral world; observe the unchangeableness of God's laws; see how right is ever right and wrong is ever wrong; how the centuries make no difference in the quality of righteousness, and fail to work any improvement in the deformity of evil.

III. The third point to which we are called in these words is the high authority of the righteous censor. When Jesus Christ

spoke in this case, He did not speak altogether in His own name. He used the name of Esaias. All time is on the side of the righteous man; all history puts weapons into the hands of the man who would be valiant for truth. When you speak a right word, the prophets speak through you, the apostles prolong the strain, and the grand old martyrs seal it with their blood.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 305.

REFERENCES: xv. 8, 9.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 72. xv. 9.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, pp. 212, 235. xv. 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 312.

**Chap. xv., ver. 13.—"But he answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."**

GOD the Uprooter of Sects.

I. The disciples needed this lesson, that they might not be startled by the fading away of much which had seemed to them fair and vigorous, but still more that they might understand what there was in the Jewish soil which could not be rooted out—what there was that would spread its fibres more widely, genially, and send out higher branches wherein the fowls of the air might dwell. The sect of the Pharisees, our Lord says, His heavenly Father had *not* planted. The disciples of Jesus learnt gradually from His lips that they were called and chosen out to preach to their own countrymen that the Son of David and the Son of Abraham had come to bind together in one publicans and sinners—Jews, Galileans, Samaritans. With this message they were to go forth, with this Gospel to Jews and Gentiles. As they bore it, they soon discovered that the natural and necessary antagonists of it were the sects; that Sadducees and Pharisees hated it equally; that they saw in it the destruction of the sect-principle; that they felt they could only maintain even a temporary ascendency by fighting with this rival as for life and death. Then, when they found how mighty this sect-principle was, and what numbers were pledged to it, they must have recollected the words which had been spoken to them: "Every plant, which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted out."

II. There is a plant in your heart and mine which our heavenly Father has not planted, and which must be rooted out. It is that same plant of self-seeking, of opinionativeness, of party-spirit, which has shed its poison over the Church and over the world. It springs in us from that same root of

unbelief in One who is the head of us all, whose life is the common life of all, out of which all sects and parties have proceeded; from that root of pride which has led to the amazing delusion that God has not called us to be His servants and children, but that we are taking Him to be our Lord and Father. If once by His grace we are delivered from that presumption, we shall not doubt that He has taken care of His own name and His own kingdom in this earth of ours, however ignorantly His creatures have been setting themselves to defend and exalt one or the other.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 1.

REFERENCES: xv. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 423; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 48. xv. 14.—Archbishop Benson, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 67. xv. 16.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 63. xv. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 732; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 461; H.W. Bellows, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 125. xv. 21-28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 58, vol. vi., p. 143; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 98; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 297; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 148; J. Wells, *Bible Children*, p. 213; Phillips Brooks, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 312; G. Macdonald, *Miracles of our Lord*, p. 130. xv. 21-31.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 331.

Chap. xv., ver. 22.—"And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

THIS story admits us into one of those curious and subtle phases of character in Christ which, when dwelt on and understood, make Him very near to us.

I. We ask why He said these harsh and cruel things so unlike Himself; and the answer we may give is this: That He desired to get to the root of the woman's nature—a very human and natural desire. We lose the sense of what Christ was by removing Him too far from our common human nature, by thinking that He could not share in many of our ordinary impulses because He was too near to God. As if the Divine on earth would not become far more intensely human than any one of us can understand.

II. Christ's object was not only to find out that the woman loved and believed in Him, but also to kindle and to sting into vivid life the spiritual power of faith which He saw in the woman's heart. For not till that was kindled could He do her the kindness she asked. To awake that Christ gave trial, as

God gives it, and the waking of faith was well purchased at the price of a little pain. The woman's soul was ennobled for ever.

III. The story illustrates the way in which God often deals with men, and it illustrates the faithful way in which men should accept that dealing. There are some who need kindness to make them love and trust God, and God is kind and makes life smooth for such. But there are others whom persistent kindness would weaken, whose characters need sharp treatment and development. And thus they learn the prayer and the perseverance of faith, which does not call itself faith, but which is infinitely more intense in reality than that sleepy trust in God which, believing that all is right, goes drawling through an inactive life without an ideal, without a noble sadness, without a burning desire to live and know we live.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 164.

REFERENCES: xv. 22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 90; R. Glover, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 228.

**Chap. xv., vers. 22-28.**

MOTHER'S LOVE.

I. Our Lord judged this woman after He had tried her, as gold is tried in the fire. Why He did so we cannot tell. Perhaps He wanted by the trial to make her a better woman, to bring out something noble which lay in her heart unknown to her, though not to Him who knew what was in man. Perhaps He wished to show His disciples, who looked down on her as a heathen dog, that a heathen, too, could have faith, humility, nobleness, and grace of heart. Be that as it may, our Lord was seemingly stern. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And this woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phœnician by nation—of a mixed race of people, notoriously low and profligate, and old enemies of the Jews.

II. Yet in the poor heathen mother's heart there rose up a whole heaven of perfect humility, faith, adoration. If she were base and mean, yet our Lord was great and wise and good; and that was all the more reason why He should be magnanimous, generous, condescending, like a true King, to the basest and meanest of His subjects. She asked not for money or honour or this world's fine things; but simply for her child's health, her child's deliverance from some mysterious and degrading illness. Surely there was no harm in asking for that; and so, with her quick Syrian art, she answers our Lord in those wonderful words—so full of humility, of reverence, and yet with

a certain archness, almost playfulness in them, as it were turning our Lord's words against Him, and by that very thing showing how utterly she trusted Him: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." By her words she was justified. By those few words she proved her utter faith in our Lord's power and goodness—perhaps her faith in His Godhead. By those words she proved the gentleness and humility, the graciousness and gracefulness, of her own character. And so she conquered, as the blessed Lord loves to be conquered, by the prayer of faith, of humility, of confidence, of earnestness, and she had her reward.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day and other Sermons*, p. 76.

REFERENCE: xv. 22, 23.—E. Bersier, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 159.

Chap. xv., ver. 23.—"But He answered her not a word."

OUT of many lessons to be drawn from the terrible and touching narrative of the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent we notice three.

I. With respect to the disciples. We may learn from what is not written as well as from what is written what a lesson they received upon *want of sympathy*. They fancied they understood the whole question, and that they could read in our Lord's unfathomable expression the image of their own cold, hard thoughts. We do not read that any words passed between our Lord and His disciples on the subject of this troublesome woman. But what a veil fell from the eyes of these men (so satisfied that they were doing their own duty and the will of their Master) when a few moments later they heard Him exclaim, "O daughter, great is thy faith." The very quality which our Lord was always telling them was so necessary for them and so wanting in them lay in a rich overflowing store in the heart of this heathenish woman.

II. The lesson of perseverance in prayer. The history gives us a picture of a person misled by appearances—(1) from want of knowing enough of Christ, and (2) from not yet having risen to that intensity of earnestness and full stretch of faith of which our nature is really capable. There is in Christ the stern goodness of a man of powerful insight; not the softness which, without doing any good, lavishes blessings before they are appreciated, but that paternal sternness which will have us brace ourselves up for a resolute, sustained effort. The prodigal son has a father's welcome, but he must come home; he must

come all the way. Like this woman, we may hear the words, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt," but not till we have deserved the earlier words, "Great is thy faith."

III. We learn something even from the daughter. Evil thoughts are to be intensely guarded against, as the ultimate source of all the sin and misery of this world. It may be that this demon-tormented girl was no sinner above the rest. But the spectacle daily before the mother's eyes was the fruit of sin somewhere, and that sin was the fruit of evil thoughts. If it was not a visitation upon individual evil, all the more fearful is the warning against all sin.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 251.

REFERENCES: xv. 23.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 529, Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 285. xv. 24, 25.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,797. xv. 26, 27.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1,309. xv. 27.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., No. 715; *Evening by Evening*, p. 87; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 140.

**Chap. xv., ver. 28.—"Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."**

THE Greatness of Faith.

I. Observe first, how widely prevalent the principle is which comes to its consummation in the giving of Himself by Christ to men. Everywhere faith, or the capacity of receiving, has a power to claim and command the thing which it needs. Nature would furnish us many an exhibition of the principle. You plant a healthy seed in the ground. The seed's health consists simply in this, that it has the power of true relations to the soil you plant it in. And how these spring days bear us witness that the soil acknowledges the power; no sooner does it feel the seed than it replies; it unlocks all its treasures of force; the little hungry black kernel is its master. "O seed, great is thy faith," the ground seems to say: "be it unto thee even as thou wilt," and so the miracle of growth begins.

II. Here was this woman whose faith had such a power over Jesus that He could not resist it. The power of weakness over strength comes to perfection in Jesus. Could there be a more complete picture of it than shines out in His own story of the shepherd and the sheep? The shepherd has folded his ninety and nine; everything is safe, and strong, and prosperous; he stands with his hand upon the sheep-fold gate; and then, just as he seems wrapped up in the satisfaction and completeness of the sight, there comes, so light that no ear except his can

hear it, the cry of one poor lost sheep off in the mountains, and it summons him with an irresistible challenge, and his staff is in his hand instantly, and he turns his back on everything else, to be the slave of that one lost sheep till it is found. What a wonderful, and everlasting, and universal story that parable is! Faith is the King's knowledge of His own kingdom. A weak man who has no faith in Christ is a king who does not know his own royalty. But the soul which in its need cries out and claims its need's dominion—the soul that dares to take the prerogative of its own feebleness and cry aloud, "Come to me, O Christ, for I need Thee," finds itself justified. Its bold and humble cry is honoured and answered instantly; instantly by its side the answer comes: "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons in English Churches*, p. 157.

I. THIS woman's earnestness is an example, as her success is an encouragement to us. She was importunate because she was earnest. If there be any boldness, any forwardness, any obtruding of her case on Jesus, it is to be imputed to this, that—a mother with a mother's heart—she had a daughter grievously vexed with a devil. Be followers of me, she says. Let faith be earnest in prayer. The more the bow is bent the more the arrow flies.

II. Observe the trials to which Christ put her earnestness and faith. These were three: (1) His silence; (2) His apparent refusal; (3) His apparent reproach of her. That was a strange blow from the hand which was to bleed on Calvary for the chief of sinners, and bind up the broken-hearted, not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax. In truth, it was time for her to pray, "Lord, help me;" high time, poor soul, for God to help her. And He did it, and fulfilled to her, as He will do to all who seek Him in their hour of extremity, His promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." As the eagle rising on the tempest that beats down birds of feeble wing, and sends them to roost in covert of bush and rock, flies highest in the storm, so did she; with holy zeal as well as power, she seizes on our Lord's figure and turns it to her own advantage. His purpose, which was a gracious one all along, is now gained. He had sought to draw her out, and bring forth that latent faith the language of which was music to His ear, gratifying the longings of His loving heart, and glorifying

the power and grace of God. That purpose gained, he drops the mantle. And now he reveals Himself to her, as He shall to all who will not let Him go until He bless them, crowning her faith with the gracious answer, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 210.

NOTE—I. the woman's humble confession.
II. Her thankfulness for the smallest mercy.
III. Her plea; she appeals to our Lord's generosity.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 228

CONSIDER the four principal cases in which our Lord emphatically commends the faith of those who come to Him for succour.

I. The first is the case of the man sick of the palsy, described in the second chapter of St. Mark. The sick of the palsy was borne to Jesus by four men, and "when they could not come nigh Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was, and let down the bed whereon the sick man lay." The hindrances to the accomplishment of their purpose were of an outward and material kind.

II. Again, the blind son of Timæus, as he sat begging at the gate of Jericho, was interrupted in his cries for mercy by those who surrounded him. In his case, again, it is persevering faith which our Lord rewards, and the obstacles to success arise from the opposition and interference of others.

III. In the case of the centurion who desired the cure of his servant, we are not distinctly told of any impediments which would keep him from seeking help from Jesus; we are only left to infer them from his own language. His faith is commended in the strongest language, because the hindrance which would naturally have kept him from Christ was the enjoyment of prosperity and power.

IV. The incident narrated in the text, which is rightly considered as the strongest instance of faith triumphant over difficulties, is different from any of these. Here the obstacles to success are interposed by Christ Himself. Still the woman persisted, and still she was refused, no longer by silence, but by language more harsh and discouraging than silence itself, till at last, when she turns the very reason for the refusal into a proof of her need, and her confidence that Christ will supply it, He speaks to her in words of most gracious commendation; He grants her petition without any further delay. Once more,

then, we see the victory ascribed to faith, but the difficulties here overcome are those of delay and disappointment.

BISHOP COTTON, *Marlborough Sermons*, p. 196.

THE Canaanite Mother a Type of the Gentile Church.

I. Note first the race and country of the believing mother. In the narrative Christ is said to have departed to the coasts or borders of Tyre and Sidon, and the woman to have "come out of the same coasts." St. Matthew adds that she was a "woman of Canaan." And St. Mark tells us that she was to be considered a Greek (that is, by religion, and habits), "a Syro-Phœnician by nation." These brief notes of country and origin embrace every great division of the then known Gentile world, considered as to position relatively to Israel, and still more regarded (as the Old Testament prophets always regarded them) with a view to their open hostility or hollow and treacherous alliances.

II. Now for a brief summary of the interview. (1) It is the second Adam, and the Church the second Eve. Humble, repentant, and believing, she comes from the long slavery of her idols. She acknowledged that the true solution of the physical and moral curse of this world was the supremacy of him whom the Son of David, and He alone, was empowered to overthrow. (2) Her reception was as remarkable as her appeal. "He answered her not a word." The religion of Christ had at first no word for the Gentile, and its subsequent extension was only an instance of that triumphant wisdom of Heaven which brought the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and enlightened the world by Jewish blindness. The objections of the Lord were twofold; one taken from the limits of His commission, and one from the degradation of the object. And I need not remind you how perfectly the *wider* parallel corresponds; how the body of the Gentiles, the oppressed of Satan, were excluded from Divine favour, partly by the mysterious limitations of Providence, and partly by the enormity of their own pollutions. (3) The woman insinuated that the Lord had power above His commission; and by that omnipotence which ruled the world it had created, she invoked Him: "Lord, help me." (4) In her words, "Truth, Lord," etc., all Christianity is concentrated in one happy sentence. Men from deep places can see the stars at noonday, and from the utter depths of her self-abasement she catches the whole blessed mystery of Heaven. With what joy did the blessed Teacher see

Himself foiled in that high argument! how gladly did He yield the victory to that invincible faith!

W. ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 155.

Chap. xv., ver. 28.—"O woman, great is thy faith."

I. THE great faith of this woman is to be traced in her humble confession. (1) She confesses her misery when imploring the mercy of Christ. (2) She confesses her weakness when imploring the help of Christ. (3) She confesses her unworthiness by admitting the mission of Christ.

II. The great faith of this woman is to be traced in her fervent prayer. (1) Mark her recognition of the character of Christ. (2) Observe her confidence in the power of Christ. (3) Notice her earnestness in seeking the aid of Christ.

III. The great faith of this woman is to be discovered by her determined perseverance: (1) Her faith overcame the difficulty of obtaining a personal interview with Christ. (2) Her faith overcame the singularly apparent coldness of Christ. (3) Her perseverance overcame the limitation of the usual ministrations of Christ.

J. WONNACOTT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 156.

REFERENCES: xv. 28.—J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 123; S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 208; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 128; J. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 156; E. H. Bradby, *Sermons Preached at Haileybury*, p. 49; T. T. Lynch, *Sermons for my Curates*, p. 317; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 251; W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 33. xv. 32-39.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 221; Parker, *Inner Life fo Christ*, vol. ii., p. 340.

Chap. xv., vers. 33, 34.

CHRIST'S direction was, "How many loaves have ye?" And of this sentence it has been strikingly observed that it is characteristic of the way in which all Christ's nature was wont to move together at once. Christ felt and thought, pitied and weighed, at the same moment. He never did mischief by His benevolence, because His judgment was behind it. The direction of the text is luminous with important principles for the duty we are thinking of to-day.*

I. First, there is the instinct of sacrifice. These loaves were what the disciples had brought for their own use—a frugal, sparse, and homely provision. What they were invited to give

* Sermon on Foreign Missions.

away they had the right, not unreasonably, to reserve for themselves. "Not so," said the Lord. "It is yours—to share with them." Does any ask when the kingdom of Christ will really begin to grow? Only when the Church becomes capable of sacrifices worthy of herself and her Lord.

II. Another principle involved in our Lord's words is the duty of economy. Economy is patent everywhere in the dominion of nature, and it is to be a ruling principle in the activities of grace. Eminently it guided our Lord in the exercise of His supernatural power.

III. This sentence also contains the law of continuity, full of help and guidance for the Church of God. We are not isolated, broken units: we are members of a great body, some of whom are in earth, some in heaven, all of whom must overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, not loving their lives unto the death.

IV. Once more we see the beginning of faith. All great undertakings have grown out of tiny beginnings—grown often to the unspeakable surprise of those who first took them in hand. In fact, there are four stages in the history of mission work—contempt, persecution, acquiescence, triumph; and we are now in the third. Our duty is to obey our Master's orders, leaving the result with Him. As we obey our efforts are blessed, our provision is multiplied, we find ourselves fellow-workers with God; the starving multitudes are nourished and satisfied with the bread of life. Only let us see what God asks of us, and what mankind need of us; what the Church claims, and what the Advent will discover; and then, out of the touched and listening hearts of stirred thousands, rivers of water will flow, to give life to the world.

BISHOP THOROLD, *Family Churchman*, Feb. 23rd, 1887.

**Chap. xv., ver. 34.—"And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye?"**

IN this act of our Lord's there were two principles so fundamental that the Divine power of Jesus worked by them almost of necessity, so important that they must be made prominent even in all His impetuous eagerness to help those starving men. The first is the principle of continuity, that what is to be must come out of that which has been, that new things must come to be by an enlargement, a development, a change, a growth of old things; and the second is the principle of economy, that nothing, however little or poor, is to be wasted.

I. These two principles are stamped on all the operations of nature. Forget nature, and say, "Feed me, or I shall starve," and His question comes back to you, "How many loaves have you? Give me something to begin with, however little it may be." Drop the old remnants of a past life into the ever-fruitful soil, and all the possibilities of new life open.

II. The same truth appears in the use which God makes of men in the world. All history bears witness that when God means to make a great man He puts the circumstances of the world and the lives of lesser men under tribute. All earnest, pure, unselfish, faithful men, who have lived their obscure lives well, have helped to make him. It is the continuity and economy of human life. The great feast grows out of the few loaves and fishes.

III. In all training of character this law must be supreme. Not lawlessness, not slavish subjection to law, is the system under which we live. Progress and growth; but growth from old conditions, progress from the basis of the old life,—this is our law. Is not this what many a poor creature needs to know? You understand that you are wicked. You understand what it is to be good. But the gulf between is dreadful, impassable. What is there in you that can grow into that? Nothing. The development out of the old still needs the mightier force. Evolution is not Atheism. God must do what must be done, but God will do it. God will make you good, by sending His light and love into this past of yours, and giving all that there is good in its true development and consecration.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 127.

REFERENCES: xv. 36.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 88. xvi. 1-12.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 157; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. ii., p. 348. xvi. 2.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 284. xvi. 2, 3.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 411. xvi. 3.—R. Thomas, *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 248; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 392, vol. xiv., p. 10; J. Guinness Rogers, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvii., p. 56; F. W. Farrar, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 97; C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 429. xvi. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 114. xvi. 12.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 216; R. Scott, *University Sermons*, p. 151.

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### Chap. xvi., vers. 13-16.

I. ACCORDING to the reply of Peter to Christ's general question, the impression which Christ made upon the various classes with

whom He came in contact was, with rare exceptions, that He was a Personage far surpassing, in greatness, and truth, and grace, all whom they had ever seen or known. His contemporaries, dull, and selfish, and worldly as many of them were, felt instinctively that He was one for whom they could find no just comparison. (1) His miracles declared His power, and fanned the widespread enthusiasm into an intense flame. (2) His teaching was new, original, and authoritative. With astonishment and delight the multitudes confessed, "He teaches with authority, and not as the scribes." (3) On down-trodden, guilty outcasts Christ looked with Divine compassion, and declared that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He drew them to Him, and spake words to them the like of which they had never heard before. Thus He became the centre of almost universal wonder, and trust, and worship.

II. The popular conception concerning Christ was a very exalted one; nevertheless, He put it aside as incomplete, as short of the truth. "The people say of Me that I am John the Baptist, or Elias, or one of the prophets; but whom say ye that I am?" "Thou art Christ, Son of the living God." To that belief in Him Christ gave His sanction and approval. To that He set His seal that it was true. This is an important consideration. There are those who think of Him as the Prophet, the tender, loving Brother, the purest and loftiest Soul that has ever lived in our world—but no more. Christ everywhere claimed to be more than simply a good man. A hearty belief in Christ as the Son of God is, in my judgment, a matter of supreme importance to any one who aims at the full mastery of his sins, and who aspires to complete vigour and fulness of religious life and character.

III. The great confession, "Thou art the Son of God," came from the lips of a disciple. It is ever so. The knowledge of Christ—His saving might, His inspiring energy, the riches of His love—can only be possessed by him who has entered into close and loving fellowship.

T. HAMMOND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 33.

REFERENCES: xvi. 13.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 132. xvi. 13-16.—J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 235. xvi. 13-19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 457; J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 30; *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 430. xvi. 13-20.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 164. xvi. 13-23.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 2. xvi. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 112; H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 200.

Chap. xvi., vers. 15-17, 21.

PETER'S Confession of Faith, and Christ's Prediction of His Passion.

I. At the end of the second year of His ministry, Christ wrought the astounding miracle of multiplying the loaves for the five thousand persons. That miracle led to the no less wonderful discourse which St. John relates in his sixth chapter, and to the withdrawal of many of our Lord's followers. The crisis had arrived, and naturally, while His enemies drew their bands of union more closely together against Him, He turned to test the fidelity of His friends, and to develop His views more explicitly to them. From the time of Peter's confession He began to prepare them for His cross and passion.

II. Consider what practical effect the faith in Christ's Divinity has upon us, and what is its connection in our own minds with His passion and with His death upon the cross for us. (1) It sets the seal on the deep foundation of God's immutable will; it gives us a rock of everlasting strength to rest on; it spreads those everlasting arms beneath us, which hold us up in deep assurance that His love is most patient and His endurance eternal. (2) There is another feeling set deep in your heart —the desire to be known of those you love, without secrets, without dissimulation, without error or defect. Where will you look for this but in the presence of Him who is invisible and comprehendeth all things? No knowledge of the heart is so searching as His omniscience; no hatred of evil is so pure as His, who is perfect goodness; and while He knows, while He hates all, then His love is most consoling. We can fling ourselves at His feet, because He knows us thoroughly and already. (3) As our Lord's Divinity gives infinite worth to all His human sufferings which are past, so does it ensure the endurance of His human sympathy for all our needs in the present and in the future.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 22.

REFERENCES: xvi. 15-18.—W. Spensley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 268. xvi. 16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 333. xvi. 17.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 108. xvi. 17-23.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 344.

Chap. xvi., ver. 18.

THE Unity of the Church.

I. That all Christians are, in some sense or other, one, in our Lord's eyes, is plain, from various parts of the New Testament. It is to this one body, regarded as one, that the special privileges

of the Gospel are given. It is not that this man receives the blessing, and that man, but one and all; the whole body as one man, one new spiritual man, with one accord, seeks and gains it.

II. When asked why we Christians must unite into a visible body or society, I answer (1) that the very earnestness with which Scripture insists upon a spiritual unseen unity at present, and a future unity in heaven, of itself directs a pious mind to the imitation of that unity visible on earth; for why should it be so continually mentioned in Scripture, unless the thought of it were intended to sink deep into our minds and direct our conduct here? (2) But again, our Saviour prays that we may be one in affection and in action; yet what possible way is there of many men acting together, except that of forming themselves into a visible body or society, regulated by certain laws and officers? and how can they act on a large scale and consistently, unless it be a permanent body? (3) I might rest the necessity of Christian unity upon one single institution of our Lord's, the sacrament of baptism. Baptism is a visible rite, confessedly; and St. Paul tells us that by it individuals are incorporated into an already existing body. But if every one who wishes to become a Christian must come to an existing visible body for the gift, it is plain that no number of men can ever, consistently with Christ's intention, set up a Church for themselves. All must receive their baptism from Christians already baptized; and thus we trace back a visible body or society even to the very time of the Apostles themselves. (4) One other guarantee, which is especially suggested by our Lord's words in the text, for the visible unity and permanence of His Church, is the appointment of rulers and ministers, entrusted with the gifts of grace, and these in succession. The ministerial orders are the ties which bind together the whole body of Christians in one; they are its organs, and they are, moreover, its moving principle.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 230.

REFERENCES: xvi. 18.—S. G. Green, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 49; L. Abbott, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxii., p. 362; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 103; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 58; E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 152; J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 255; W. Anderson, *Discourses*, p. 66; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 309. xvi. 18, 19.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 1.

### Chap. xvi., vers. 21-26.

GREAT Purposes and Interruptive Voices. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go."

Special emphasis should be laid upon the word "must," in order to discover the depth and range of the idea which the speaker seeks to convey. The emphasis, so placed, gives us the utterance of a great purpose. "Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." This is an interruptive voice. Christ and Peter set before us the broadest contrasts in human development.

I. The majesty of a purpose imparts to its possessor tranquillity in anticipation of the severest trials. What are the constituent elements of heroism? I answer, a great purpose, and faith in it. Given the purpose and the faith, and you have strength, and patience, and hope, and surest victory.

II. Superficial natures cannot interpret the majesty of a great purpose. Did ever a great idea realize its "must go" without having to encounter interruptive Peters? Little ideas, respectable enterprises, decent actions have passed along the world's highway without much incommodation; but the ideas that have given love to the heart and direction to the understanding, of an age or an empire, have had to fight their way to Jerusalem step by step.

III. Great purposes are necessarily associated with self-sacrifice. (1) Whoso follows a great leader must expect great sacrifices. (2) The spirit and example of a great moral leader must ever be reproduced.

IV. Great purposes always correctly estimate the value of material possessions.

V. Superficial natures always proceed on a self-defeating policy. Christ's testimony is clear: "For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it."

PARKER, *Hidden Springs*, p. 361; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 177.

REFERENCES: xvi. 21.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 271; R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 376. xvi. 21-23.—C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 47. xvi. 21-26.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 61. xvi. 21-28.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 173. xvi. 22.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 376. xvi. 23.—W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 345.

Chap. xvi., ver. 24.—"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

ONE of the proofs of the truth and of the Divine origin of our religion is that it gives such a distinct notice of the difficulties

which its followers will have to encounter. What other religion could *afford* to speak like this?

I. "*Deny himself.*" As in the natural character selfishness and affection are two such opposite principles that the man that is selfish can never be truly affectionate, and the man that is affectionate will never be long selfish, so in the spiritual life self and the Divine love are the two great antagonists which do battle in a man's heart. Between these two, from the moment that any one is really in earnest in religion, there is contest, severe and unceasing, even to death, till ultimately either self, being allowed, stifles grace, or grace, being cherished, gradually swallows up self, till all self loses itself in Jesus.

II. "*Daily.*" What is the cross? What is it that a man is to take up? Not some very great thing which is to come by-and-by. Against that idea Christ appears especially to have guarded us when He added the word "daily." The cross must be a trial which has something humiliating in it, something which brings a sense of shame, something which lingers, something which is painful to the old nature, for that is exactly what the cross was.

III. "*Follow Me.*" What is it worth to deny one's self how much soever, or to take up a cross however hard, if it be not done in reference to Christ—with an express intention towards Christ? But to do all these things with the eye only to Jesus as all our righteousness and peace; to do them because He wishes it and as He did it, that He may be magnified—this is to obey a doctrine while we fulfil a command, and therefore this is in the spirit of the requisition to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Jesus.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 282.

THE command which the text contains is based upon the great principle of the imitation of Christ. Unlike all other legislators, His *life* is the law of His people.

If we would gain the root of the matter, then we must contemplate suffering as manifested in Christ Himself.

I. The great primary fact, upon which all the essential peculiarities of our religion are founded, is that God became strangely, inconceivably connected with pain; that this Being, whose nature is inherent happiness, by some mysterious process entered the regions of suffering, crossed the whole diameter of existence, to find Himself with His own opposite; bore, though incapable of moral pollution, the dark shadow of pollution, even

anguish unspeakable; and though unsubdued by the master, Sin, exhibited Himself, to the wonder of the universe, clad in the weeds of the servant, Death.

The main reason of this fact is to be found in the necessity of atonement. But the Divine Person also visited the regions of pain in such a sense as to be our *Example;* for so the text presents Him.

II. Must we not think that there is something in the sorrow, thus cordially and perpetually chosen by our Master, that is eminently adapted to elevate and purify our being? Must there not be something divinely excellent in that which was deliberately chosen by a Divine nature as its peculiar tabernacle out of all the world afforded, the sad but awful cloud above the mercy-seat in which, while among us, His glory was to dwell? This special excellence is not hard to discover. Humbleness of spirit, the most pervading and universal of all graces, is in the Christian code the very essence of perfection, and sorrow borne with resignation has a direct tendency to produce it. Now, because our Redeemer knew, what it is so hard to persuade even His avowed followers, that in this direction lies the true perfection of man—that a gentle, unmurmuring submission is his truest, brightest heroism—therefore did He, in His own person, adopt the way that leads to it. He daily suffered, because suffering subdues the pride of human hearts, and He would teach us to accomplish that conquest.

W. ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 27.

REFERENCES: xvi. 24.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 394; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 36; vol. ii., p. 44; H. G. Bird, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 151; J. M. Nelson, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 200.

**Chap. xvi., vers. 24-28.**

THE Eucharist considered as a participation in the unselfish life of Christ.

I. From the day of his temptation, when He refused to prove Himself the Son of God by doing any work to support Himself, or to make His power manifest, or to take possession of His kingdom—from that day forward to His death, He was practising self-denial, and so was revealing the Father to men. The cross was the gathering up of all that previous sacrifice. And having proved this to be the true life of man, the law of human life, He called upon men to enter into it with Him. Self-denial was not to be an occasional act; it is the ground of man's existence, for it is the ground of His.

II. The words, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you," remind us of the daily, hourly temptation to be seeking a life of our own, to be forgetting that we are bound by the eternal law of God, by the unchangeable conditions of our own being, to our fellows, and to their Father and ours, in the well-beloved Son. These words remind us that the selfish life is in truth no life at all, but death; that to choose it is to choose death. They remind us that we are not bound to choose it; that in doing so we are renouncing our true human state, we are trying to cast off bonds which are actually holding us, we are resisting God's Spirit. They remind us that the common life is still with us; that the Son of man is still the same; that His flesh and His blood were really given for the life of the world; that our spirits groan for that life, groan to be delivered from the death into which they have fallen through self-pleasing, self-seeking. Christ bids my spirit partake of the flesh and blood which He shed for the world, as my body partakes of the bread and wine. It is what I need. It takes away the selfish glory which I have coveted; it invests me with the human glory which I have renounced. It bids me cast away that weight of cares about my body and soul which have become intolerable; it bids me throw myself upon that sacrificing love which provides for all and for each, which seeks to make me its minister to others, which can never bless me so much as by forming me after its own likeness.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 127.

REFERENCES: xvi. 24-26.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 125. xvi. 24-28.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 10.

Chap. xvi., ver. 26.—"For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

I. OUR Lord tells us in the text that our choice of a principle and end of living involves an exchange. You get nothing in life, good or bad, without cost. No man ever leaped into a success of any kind without cost to himself. Success is always paid for with some coin or other. Do you expect you will win *moral* success, spiritual victory, on any other terms?

II. Look at the nature of the exchange in this particular case. If you buy the world you pay a definite price for it, a price from which there is no discount to the most favoured buyer, and that price is your life.

Our Lord states it as a principle, a universal fact, that the man who takes the world takes it at the price of his life.

III. Suppose we go the whole length of our Lord's words. Suppose you gain the whole world, everything the world has to give you. I submit (1) that you have gotten something perishable; (2) your interest in it will not last. "The world passeth away, and *the desire of it*." (3) It will not satisfy you. (4) You have gotten something dangerous. When you buy the world you buy a master at the price of your life. (5) You come to the line at last, and pass over. Whatever price you pay for the world, you leave the world behind you when you pass the gate of death. The only thing that has any hold on the future is the Christ-like self, and if you have not that, if you have parted with that for the world, what have you?

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 21.

**Chap. xvi., ver. 26.—"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"**

EVERY one of us is able fluently to speak of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and is aware that the knowledge of it forms the fundamental difference between our state and that of the heathen. And yet, in spite of our being able to speak about it, there seems scarcely room to doubt that the greater number of those who are called Christians in no true sense realize it in their own minds at all. It is a very difficult thing to bring home to us and to feel that we have souls; and there cannot be a more fatal mistake than to suppose we see what the doctrine means as soon as we can use the words which signify it.

I. To understand that we have souls is to feel our separation from things visible, our independence of them, our distinct existence in ourselves, our individuality, our power of acting for ourselves this way or that way, our accountableness for what we do. We feel that while the world changes, we are one and the same; we are led to distrust it, and are weaned from the love of it, till at length it floats before our eyes merely as some idle veil, which, notwithstanding its many tints, cannot hide the view of what is beyond it; and we begin, by degrees, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe—our own soul, and the God who made it.

II. We never in this life can fully understand what is meant by our living for ever, but we can understand what is meant by this world's not living for ever, by its dying never to rise again. And learning this, we learn that we owe it no service, no allegiance; it has no claim over us, and can do us no material

good or harm. On the other hand, the law of God, written in our hearts, bids us serve Him, and partly tells us how to serve Him, and Scripture completes the precepts which nature began. And both Scripture and conscience tell us we are answerable for what we do, and that God is a righteous Judge; and above all, our Saviour, as our visible Lord God, takes the place of the world as the only-begotten of the Father, having shown Himself openly, that we may not say God is hidden. And thus a man is drawn by all manner of powerful influences to turn from things temporal to things eternal, to deny himself, to take up his cross and follow Christ.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 15.

I. Man has a soul. You may call it mind, or spirit, or will, or affection, or reason, even as the sea washing different continents has various names. It includes all these. Scripture reveals to us its independent creation and existence. The great difference between the soul of man and the soul and being or substance of all other creatures is that they are made out of the kingdom of nature. The soul is not created; it is derived, and its derivation is Divine.

II. Consider the value of the soul. (1) Its power. It can sin; it can suffer; it can think. (2) Its duration. For ever; no cessation. "I am, and I can never cease to be."

III. A soul may be lost. Man's greatest danger is his perverted will. But I may mention four causes of the loss of the soul: (1) ignorance; (2) error; (3) passion; (4) a perverted will, which underlies the whole. Thy soul is not truly thine till it is given to God. If you look beneath you, behold your life lying there, it is not your own; it is Satan's.

IV. The soul may be saved. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 291.

Chap. xvi., ver. 26.—"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

LET us consider why the saying of our Lord in the text, while generally admitted to be true, is yet so little laid to heart.

I. Because we are accustomed to admit freely the incomparable worth of the soul, but without a clear perception of that in which its worth consists. We feel the unique dignity of our own position in creation. We can compare ourselves with the

world around us; and it and all that it can offer of possession and power, of enjoyment and honour, is beneath the soul. But in what does this incomparable worth of the soul consist? The only true answer is this: The incomparable value of the soul consists in its being capable of and destined for communion with God in the direct meaning of the word. How few have any definite conception of this. There is but one way in which we can learn it, in the contemplation of Christ.

II. Because we have usually no clear idea of the injury which may happen to our souls. It is not sufficiently clear that there really do exist permanent consequences of a single sinful deed, even of a sinful disposition of mind. That such consequences do exist, we can plainly see in such frightful developments of sin as we find in the hardened criminal. But we do not sufficiently grasp the truth of the words, "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin."

III. Because we so often fail to perceive clearly how we can and ought to care for the salvation of our soul, and because the only successful mode of doing so is not usually pleasing to us. We do not like to admit that the care for our soul must begin with the care for its recovery, because by nature it is diseased. The care for our soul must be a care for our soul's salvation. It consists simply in turning to Christ, in accepting Him by faith, in giving ourselves up to Him in love, and in obedience to the workings of His Word and of His Spirit. By such care for our souls life will not become more painful, it will only be elevated.

R. ROTHE, *Nachgelassene Predigten*, p. 37.

REFERENCES: xvi. 26.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 269; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, p. 78; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 14; S. Cox, *Expositions*, vol. ii., p. 149. xvi. 27.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 554; B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 87; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 108. xvi. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 594.

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**Chap. xvii., vers. 1, 2.**

I. NOT for the Apostles' sake only was the glory of the Lord thus revealed. In them the whole Church since saw it, and to us, as to them, it is given as a support of faith, a kindling of our hope. To us, too, it is a witness of our Lord's Divinity; nay, more, of His Divinity and humanity together;

it is to us a faint gleam of that ineffable mystery, how man can be taken into God, how God can dwell in man, and fill him with the glory of the Father. Great is the comfort to us that He, our High Priest, our Intercessor, is thus glorified, is thus present with God, and is God. Yet does this mystery, in a still more definite way, open to us the greatness of our future hopes; it gives a glimpse of that which we have no thought to conceive, "the good things" which God has, in His boundless mercy, in store for those who love Him.

II. We have been made partakers of Christ's death, passion, resurrection, life; we also, if we be faithful, are being made partakers of His glory, for this the Apostle expressly says, that "we with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," contemplating Him and seeking, by prayer and daily diligence, to have His image, line by line, retraced in us, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, through the Lord the Spirit. Through that indwelling glory did the face of St. Stephen shine like the face of an angel. Even now do we sometimes see the faces of God's saints gleam with unearthly purity and love; even now, as the parting spirit sometimes sees heaven open, and hears and almost feels the brushing by of the angels' wings who shall carry it, or knows the room to be full of angels, or sees the Redeemer Himself, so does the body catch the light it is approaching; even now, ere we resign the sacred remains to be sown in dishonour, the solemn peace and holy calm spread over them seem to tell us by whom they were inhabited; they seem yet, like the parted spirit, to live to Him; the evening, so closed in, seems the dawning of the resurrection.

III. Our Lord stretcheth forth His hands to bless us, but it is in the form of His cross. The transfiguration is our glory; it sets forth that glory to us, but also how it was to be won for us, by bearing the cross for us; by us, by bearing ours, after Him, in His strength and following Him.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. iii., p. 223.

REFERENCES: xvii. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 92. xvii. 1, 2.—S. A. Brooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 376. xvii. 1-3.—R. C. Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 184; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 37. xvii. 1-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 476. xvii. 1-9.—J. C. Jones, *Studies in St. Matthew*, p. 274. xvii. 1-13.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 196; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p 339; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 19.

**Chap. xvii., ver. 2.—"And was transfigured before them."**

THE portion of St. Matthew's Gospel from which the text is taken may be called the Section of the Transfiguration. In it the Church is led by her Lord to a creed, to a worship, and to a work.

I. The Church is led to a creed. The time has now come for estimating the effects of the ministry of Jesus. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" The object of the Saviour's education of His Apostles was twofold—to teach them that He is Messiah; to prepare them for the truth that Messiah is to be a sorrowing, bleeding, crucified man. The Church is led to the creed of the Divinity and Atonement as the prelude to the Transfiguration.

II. In the Transfiguration itself the Church is led on to a foretaste of glorious worship and high communion—the meeting for a while of the Church militant with the Church triumphant.

III. In the Transfiguration Jesus leads His Church to a work—a work which at first, indeed, they could not perform. On the next day, as they come down from the hill, they find a sufferer below. Strange contrast. Above, the pure heaven; the words of Divine attestation; the form of saints floating in light; the glory, and honour, and majesty given to Jesus. Below, the reproach; the well-meant but baffled effort; the foam on the cut lip; the withered body; the sullen muteness, broken by epileptic cries—the sad lines drawn by St. Mark in four pictorial words. Yet there is a fresh unselfish joy in the energy which Jesus throws into that victorious work. "And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour." It would not be difficult to point out in the Transfiguration (1) a remarkable prophetic symbol of the history of the Church, (2) a summary of the forms of her varied life.

IV. I conclude by drawing two lessons for the spiritual life of each of us: (1) Our individual life must follow and summarize the Section of the Transfiguration. (*a*) We must lay the foundation deep and strong in the confession of Peter. (*b*) There must be the love of prayer, of communion with the world unseen; there must be the sacramental feeding upon Christ, the Bread of life; there must be the upward drawing by Christ into the eternal hills. (2) Think of our transfiguration as the result of His. Even our fallen humanity affords hints of this. Each face and form aspires to an ideal which it is the work of art to find. High thoughts and pure emotions ennoble or-

dinary features. Dying believers catch a radiance from a hidden glory. Such as Christ is in His Transfiguration, such in their measure shall His faithful servants one day be. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *The Great Question*, p. 213.

REFERENCES: xvii. 2, 3.—W. J. Keay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 397. xvii. 2, 9.—C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 207. xvii. 4.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 145. xvii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 909; see also *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 22; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,459. xvii. 5-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1,727. xvii. 6, 7.—J. Jackson Wray, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 90.

Chap. xvii., ver. 4.—"Lord, it is good for us to be here."

THE disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration had—

I. A vision of Christ's Divinity.

II. A vision of glorified saints.

III. A vision of the Father's presence.

IV. A vision of Jesus only.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 345.

REFERENCE: xvii. 5.—C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 153.

Chap. xvii., ver. 8.—"They saw no man, save Jesus only."

THE Transfiguration, with all its heavenly loveliness, its purity, its fellowship, and its glory, had evidently not been an unmixed enjoyment to the three men who were elected to see it. They were not yet capable of such a scene. It was a comfort and relief to them when it all passed away, and they awoke and lifted up their eyes, and saw "Jesus only."

I. Thus it has been, and it is and it will be, with the pageant of life. There are thousands of things in the world which glisten brightly, and they are about us a little while, and we feel it good to be there. But they were never made to stay. At the best, they are but the poor copies of some great original, for which we were created, and to which they are pointing. And presently, just when we least expect it, it is all withdrawn. And what is left? Truth, reality, simplicity, love, light, the eternal. And what are all these? Have they an embodiment? Jesus —"Jesus only."

II. At the Transfiguration all the rest was only circumstance. It could come and go, wonderful and Divine as it was. But it

was not essential; essence never goes, and the essence of everything which is good, and true, and happy, in all worlds, is Jesus. What we have continually to do is to separate circumstance from fact, the non-essential from the essential; to reduce everything to its first principles, to its germs; to see the "I Am"—"Jesus only." (1) See it in the great plan of our salvation. So long as you allot a fraction of the work to yourself, you will never have peace. It is all and only Jesus. (2) Or see it in our sanctification. The Holy Spirit does His own proper work. We fight our great battle with sin. The righteousness of Christ is accounted to us, laid on us like a robe. (3) Or look at the rich and hallowed things with which God has provided, and decked, and endowed His Church—its order, its ministry. They are all the visible expression of great, deep, invisible truths, which lie within them all like hidden mysteries.

III. Could you live upon the mountain of beatitude, and every scene be tipped with gladness, and all this dull existence be transformed into brilliancy, there would be a void. You would want something; you would not be quite happy—never, till you have "Jesus only." Jesus is the soul's complement.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 45.

REFERENCES: xvii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 924; E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 187; E. D. Solomon, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 378; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, pp. 79, 138; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 253. xvii. 14-21.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 344; S. D. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 102. xvii. 14-27. - Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 29. xvii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 821.

Chap. xvii., ver. 19.—"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?"

I. THERE are two different ideas about the way in which the problems of the world are to be solved, the salvation of the world, whatever it is, is to be brought about. Pure irreligion looks to man to do it. Let man go on thinking, inventing, planning, governing, and the result must come. On the other hand, a certain kind of religion looks to God to do it. Let men lie still, purely submissive, without a movement or a will, and God, in His good time, will bring the happy end. The first of these two ideas has no faith, and it fails. The other idea fails also. Man standing aloof, and expecting to see God redeem the world, sees no such thing. Then, too, there is a lack of faith; man learns that simply to trust God with expectation that He will do everything is not faith. Then, in the failure of these

two ideas about the world's salvation, comes another, which is distinctly different from either. Not man alone, and not God alone, is going to purify the world. But man and God, made one by perfect sympathy, by the entire openness of life between them, they are the two together; nay, they two together are not two; they are the one which is to make the old world into the new world by the driving out of sin. The principle which makes God and man to be one power is faith.

II. In Christ there was the fulfilment of that which when men try to conceive of what the world needs most, is the complete expression of their fullest dreams—man in God, God in man, the Divine and human perfectly reconciled, perfectly united; not two forces, but one force. That was the Christ who went from haunt to haunt of the devils, and bade them flee; and they, the devils of hatred, cruelty, lust, selfishness, brutishness, superstition—they all fled at His presence. And now to fill the earth with Himself, that is His wish and purpose, that is what He is labouring for through all these slow, discouraging centuries, in which, beneath the turmoil and distress upon the surface, the watchful ear can never fail to hear below the sounds which tell us that He is still at work. What is the real meaning of His purpose? Is He not trying to make His brethren what He was, to assert in them, as it was asserted in Him, that it is an Incarnation, a God in man, that is to save the world?

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons in English Churches*, p. 179.

REFERENCES: xvii. 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 346; T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees and Homiletic Undergrowth*, p. 36; S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 232.

Chap. xvii., vers. 19, 20.—"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief."

CHRIST our Pattern.

I. There are two things very hard to our moral natures, and yet most necessary to our happiness; the one of these is that we should be very much afraid of sin, the other that we should not be afraid of death. We know quite well that we ought to be both the one and the other. But this is not enough; we require to learn how we may become so, as well as to know that we ought to become so. Now it was for this end that Christ lived and died openly amongst us, and that the particulars of His life and death were recorded. He might have borne our nature as truly, and died for our sins as truly, had His life been passed away from the sight of men, or had He,

like Moses, resigned His spirit on the top of some lonely mountain into the hands of His heavenly Father. But how much of the best support of our souls should we have lost had this been so. We are not only told briefly that He took our nature upon Him, that He lived upon earth for more than thirty years; but we are made, in a manner, the witnesses of His birth, the companions of His ripened manhood. We see Him forsaken, and we see Him insulted; we see Him enduring the extremity of bodily pain; we see Him—and it is the divinest mercy of all—suffering the extremity of inward trouble, of desolateness and fear. We see Him in all these, and we see Him triumph over them all; and we hear Him, when all were over-past, giving up His spirit into the hands of God, to show that in all things we too may be more than conquerors "through Him that loved us."

II. The book in which we may read this is in our hands, and we can use it when we will. It hardly matters what particular chapter of the Gospels we open, for Christ's life is in every part of it more or less our pattern. The readiest way to have our faith so strengthened as that it may cast out the evil of our hearts is to make ourselves fully acquainted with all the particulars of Christ's character and life and death. Making His words, on every occasion, familiar to us; so bringing before our minds His actions, so imaging—for surely we may and should try to do so—His very voice and look, may we bring our souls into constant communion with Him.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 17.

CONSIDER the principles which flow from this text.

I. We have an unvarying power. (1) We have a Gospel which can never grow old. (2) We have an abiding spirit. (3) We have a Lord, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

II. The condition of exercising this power is faith.

III. Our faith is ever threatened by subtle unbelief.

IV. Our faith can only be maintained by constant devotion and rigid self-denial. A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xvii. 19-21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 549; *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 23; S. R. Hole, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 154.

Chap. xvii., ver. 20.—"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

THE ground of faith in God and immortality is not authority or demonstration, but our sense of right.

I. First, the very fact of our having a sense of right makes it probable that God exists. We do not know where that sense of right comes from. It is the one thing which the theory of development has to stop short of; it is the one thing it cannot give any credible reason for. It seems that there must be an intelligent Will outside of us who is the source of truth, a living Goodness which does not grow into being in us through ages of development, but which has been always and is.

II. Let us take this sense of right with us, and look at the world around us. How shall we explain its being? There are two theories of the world—the Atheistic and the Theistic. We are bound, as scientific men, to choose that theory as probably true which explains best the greatest number of facts, which agrees and harmonizes best with what we have observed. We find order, intelligence, progress to an end, unity among infinite diversity; and the conclusion is that it is probable, in a very high degree, that there is a thoughtful Will behind and in the universe.

III. I turn to the spiritual world. I find existing in myself, and in the greater number of mankind, a whole world of feelings which belong to this idea of God; I find, on looking back through history, that these and similar feelings existed in all civilized communities, nay, that in savage nations, even before the social ideas took shape, these existed in rude form. Did these ideas develop out of nothing? Are they going in the end to nothing? All my sense of right in matters of feeling denies that. I must suppose some One who is Himself the feeling source of all this feeling, and who is its end. Thus probability is added to probability in our minds, and by such addition faith is built up—built up not out of spiritual feeling only, but also out of the confessions of probability which the intellectual sense of truth and the moral sense of right are induced to make.

S. A. Brooke, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 38.

References: xvii. 20.—D. W. Simon, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 307; H. Goodwin, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 296. xvii. 21.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, p. 283; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 223. xvii. 24, 25.—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 180. xvii. 24-27.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 223; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 182. xvii. 25, 26.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,780.

Chap. xvii., ver. 27.

THE story of the tribute-money is not one of the great miracles, and yet its lessons are well worth our careful study.

I. There is what, for the want of a better word, we must call the modesty of Jesus. Rather than offend the prejudices of the people, He would waive His claim. Are not we who call ourselves His disciples too ready to put forth our titles to men's respect and to stand upon our dignity? Let us not be too exacting, but seek the spirit of Christ, "who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross."

II. We learn something of the poverty of Jesus. If ever there was a poor man, it was the Lord of life and glory. There is something of greater moment than wealth, and that is character. Money may not elevate, good deeds do. In the conventional meaning of the words, Christ was not worth fifteen pence; yet He could heal the sick and raise the dead. It will be worth our while to weigh ourselves in the true balances, and to find out Heaven's assessment of our belongings.

III. The story gives us a peep into Christ's resources. Though He had not the money by Him, He knew where it was. The gold and silver are all His. It could be brought out if the Lord willed it, and yet His treasury is often empty.

IV. We learn that God does not often act without human agency. Christ could have done without Peter. It would have been easy to have willed it, and the fish would have swum to His feet as He stood by the side of the lake, and have dropped the coin within His reach. But He knew that Peter could catch the fish, and so he was sent to do what he was able. It appears to be the Divine plan to do what men cannot, but not to act for us.

V. The story teaches us that he who works for Jesus is sure to get his pay. Christ wanted fifteen pence, and Peter took out of the fish's mouth half-a-crown. And thus in obeying Christ he paid his own taxes. In keeping His commandments there is great reward.

T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 102.

REFERENCES: xvii. 27.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 316; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 118.

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Chap. xviii., vers. 1-4.

BECOMING like Little Children.

I. The disciples had asked our Lord, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And the answer which our Lord made, though it did not give them any particular light as to

the manner in which the coming of His kingdom should be realized, did yet give them a view of one leading feature of that kingdom, and impressed it upon them in such a manner that they could never forget it. He took a little child, and set it in the midst of them as a pattern and example, and He said, "Except ye be converted"—that is, except ye be altogether turned from your present jealous, ambitious, rivalrous state of mind—"and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

II. Now it is obvious that there is much in the character of a little child from which the disciples of our Lord, as ourselves, might learn lessons of great value to their souls: childlike gentleness, teachableness, obedience, truthfulness, purity; in fact, the apparent absence of all the evil qualities and passions, which, though existing in the child's heart in the seed, have not yet become visible. But I apprehend there is one special quality of the mind of a little child which our Saviour intended principally to hold forth in the text, and this is its unconsciousness of any dignity belonging to it or to its actions. "Whosoever shall *humble* himself," says our Lord, "as this little child."

III. The lesson which the disciples were chiefly intended to learn is not without its value for ourselves; for it points out to us (1) the manner in which we are to walk along the narrow way which leads to life, ever pressing towards the mark, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, without looking upon other things, and without comparing ourselves with others who are striving for the same crown. (2) Imitate little children in the matter of the relation in which your reason stands to your faith. God reveals to you that which you could never have found out for yourselves, and which therefore it becomes you to receive at His hands humbly and thankfully. If we first receive God's revelation with a little child's humility, and when we have received it, walk with a little child's purity and simplicity, then we shall be able to grow in the knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, until we come to that blessed state in which we shall know even as we are known.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 310.

REFERENCES: xviii. 1-4.—H. Ward Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 298. xviii. 1-10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 151. xviii. 1-14.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 200; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 40. xviii. 2.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 77.

Chap. xviii., vers. 2, 3.

CHRISTIAN Innocence.

When our Lord took a child, and set it in the midst of the disciples, and made its face the answer to their question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" nay, even told them they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven unless they were converted and became as that child, he certainly laid them and us under a very serious obligation to inquire what it is in this image which He loved, and after which He would mould us.

I. The purity and innocence of any human creature are not and cannot be his own; we are only innocent so far as we claim nothing of our own, so far as we look out of ourselves, so far as we forget ourselves in another. The reverence for unconsciousness, the almost worship of childhood, are nothing else than a silent homage to this doctrine. And the protest against mere unconsciousness, the desire we feel that a child should grow into a distinct living person, the conviction we have that the command, "Know thyself," does descend from heaven, even when obedience to it seems sometimes to bring us to the very brink of hell,—this also is a witness in behalf of the same doctrine. For how can there be any giving up of self if there is not a self to give up? How can a man cease from his own works and his own strivings if there is nothing working and striving within him which he has to cease from?

II. All attempts to make ourselves innocent by putting ourselves into a regulated atmosphere, and trying to bar out the intrusion of evil, all attempts to cut ourselves off from sinners, lest they should defile us; all treatment of other men's evils as if they were not our own, must be fatal to the acquisition of Christ's innocence, the only innocence which God knows anything of. On the other hand, it is contradicting Scripture, and reason, and experience to say that those who have been most stained with outward and inward defilements may not receive the gift of innocency in its fullest measure. "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," was the confident and well-grounded assurance of a man upon whose conscience lay the burden of adultery and murder. Let men frame what notions they may about baptismal purity, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper witnesses that the sin-stricken man, who has discerned that he never had and never can have anything righteous in himself, may become altogether childlike and spot-

less when he turns from himself and seeks for fellowship with Him in whom is no sin.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 82.

REFERENCE: xviii. 2, 3.—J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 10.

Chap. xviii., ver. 3.—"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

I. THE expression "converted" is one requiring careful examination; with the simple Greek word faithfully rendered, our text would be, "Except ye be *turned*." It appears, then, that men must be turned, or they cannot enter into Christ's heavenly kingdom. This first implies that they are, before such turning takes place, proceeding in a direction which will not lead them to that kingdom. We are all, when Christ's Gospel meets with us, proceeding in a direction averse from that which is our highest interest, the salvation of our body, soul, and spirit, in a glorious and eternal state. We are seeking the lower welfare of the animal soul, not the higher welfare of the immortal spirit. The direction of our path must be changed; we must be turned.

II. Of what sort is this turning? It is plain that it is not any partial change in the outward life, not any polishing and rounding of the circumference of a man's character, but a changing of the centre itself, a change thorough and complete. It is not the opinions alone which are in question here; the desires are changed also. From having no mind to God, no eye to eternity, the desire after Him is awakened, and things invisible and eternal assume their proper place of prominence.

III. Consider the manner of the change. The turning is not the work of an instant. However rapid the thaw, the thick-ribbed realm of ice will not melt away but by degrees. However complete the renewal at last, there is an inertia to be overcome, an impulse to be communicated and to gather force, before the whole mass will obey the moving hand, in the spiritual as well as in the material world. There is no reason to question, but every reason to believe, that here as elsewhere the miracle is the exception, the ordinary agency by secondary means the rule; that conversion is not in the generality of cases the sudden, well-defined event which it is represented to be, but the gradual accruing result of the teaching and operation of the Spirit, working through the common every-day means of grace.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 67.

I. MAN was made for God. He made us to behold Him; beholding, to reflect Him; reflecting Him, to be glorified in Him. He willed, evermore, to shine on into our souls, to be the light of our souls, that we might see all things truly by His light. He willed to make us holy, that we might be little pictures of Himself, and that He might dwell with good pleasure upon us, as a father's soul rests with joy and love upon the child of his love. From this we fell by sin; to this God willed to restore us in Christ. Sin was to choose, against God's will, something instead of God. In whatever way the change may be wrought, a change there must be. God is the Lord, the Father, the centre of the soul. The soul must turn wholly to Him for its life, its light, its peace, its joy, its resting-place, all good to it, all goodness in it. As the flower follows the sun, opens itself to its glow, and through that glow sends forth its fragrance and ripens its fruit, so the soul must turn to Him, the Sun of righteousness, unfold itself wholly to His life-giving glow, hide nothing from His searching beams, and through the fire of His love ripen to Him the fruits of His Spirit.

II. Conversion to God is not a mere ceasing from some sin when the temptation ceases. It is not a breaking off from outward sin, while the heart enjoys the memory of it, and enacts it again in thought. Conversion is not a passing emotion of the soul, nor is it a mere passionate sorrow or remorse. Without ceasing from sin there is no conversion. Yet to cease from sin is not alone conversion; nor is it for the soul only to condemn its own sin. It is to hate, for the love of God, whatever in the soul displeases God; it is to hate its former self for having displeased God; conversion is a change of mind, a change of the heart, a change of the life. The mind, enlightened by the grace of God, sees what once it saw not; the heart, touched by the grace of God and melted by the love of God in Christ Jesus, loves what once it loved not, and the life is changed, because the mind and heart, being changed, cannot endure the slavery to the sins which before they chose; and now they love, for the love of Jesus, to submit and subdue themselves to the love of God, which before they did not endure.

E. B. PUSEY, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 16.

THERE is something exceedingly touching and full of instruction in the association of the words and acts of our blessed Lord

with little children. If the story of redemption had been invented by man, and the Son of God had been described in His incarnate course on earth by mere human imagination, we may well conceive that this would have been otherwise. The mind of the Gospel would have been that of the disciples, who forbade the children to come to Him. Our religion would have been a stern, and forbidding, and restrictive code of morals, not the glorious Gospel of freedom and love.

I. Notice the humility of the child. We may speak with children without danger of wounding their self-esteem; we feel that it ought not to be present, and we act as if it were not. We expect to find in them a natural consciousness of their lowly position, springing from the mere simplicity and meekness of the helpless and inexperienced. Now, in humility the candidate for the kingdom of heaven must be as the little child.

II. The trusting disposition of the child is necessary for the disciple of Christ. Distrust is the offspring of worldly experience. It would be in the highest degree unnatural to find it in the disposition and behaviour of a young child. Our reconciled Father in heaven calls on us to trust Him. He invites us with no double purpose. It is as much a duty to trust God as it is to serve Him.

III. We must be teachable, like little children. The child is willing to learn, ready to receive, apt to lay up what is heard; in ordinary cases, not difficult to persuade, open to truth and to conviction. So must it be with Christ's disciples.

IV. Loving obedience. It is especially the gem and perfection of a child's character to obey. He who knows God, trusts God, is taught by God, and obeys not God is a example of inconsistency difficult to conceive. Never, for a moment, imagine that you can be right in heart towards God, without a life consciously and diligently spent in obeying Him and glorifying Him, and growing up towards a perfect man in Christ under the sanctification of His Spirit.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 116.

REFERENCES: xviii. 3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 335; G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 154; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 338; S. A. Brooke, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 177; S. Baring-Gould, *Preacher's Pocket*, p. 52.

THESE words of the Lord teach us to look upon the life of the Christian as a glorified child-life.

I. As regards its faith. The child has undoubting faith in those who are set over him, in his parents and teachers. Is

there any more touching picture than that of a group of children who listen to their father or mother with eager questioning eyes, and receive as gospel every word that falls from those hallowed lips? Even as children believe with unquestioning faith, so we, whom the Son of God has purchased with His precious blood, believe our Lord. Other masters may give their disciples a stone for bread, a scorpion for an egg; the word of our Lord is evermore the bread of our lives, whether we understand its full meaning or not. He who has learned this childlike faith in his Saviour is like a man who sails out of the broad sea into a sheltered haven.

II. As regards its love. The love of the child is without partiality. Let there be only a human eye, a human face, and the child will smile to greet it; the child of the prince will clasp the hand of the beggar. And may we not say that we Christians love all men without distinction, with a childlike love? To us, also, every human face is holy, but we are better off in this respect than the child; for the child loves not always wisely. His love is blind, even as his faith is ignorant. But we in whose heart the Spirit of the Lord has implanted this love for men can read on every human brow this inscription, this solemn writing, which makes every human countenance sacred: God "hath made of one blood all nations of the earth, . . . that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

III. As regards its hope. The child's hope knows no boundary. He sees no thorns in the present, and so he can enter deep into the flowery life which he sees around him, and looking out into the future, he sees the flowers of the present blooming still. The grace of Christ offers to all Christians what is most lovely in the life of the child—its faith, its love, and its hope. And it offers these things transformed and glorified. The hope of the Christian is not the careless hope of the child; he knows why he hopes. Christians are children of hope, because they believe in Christ, who, as the Apostle says, is in them, "the hope of glory." Through the mercy of God, they are born again unto a lively hope.

F. A. THOLUCK, *Predigten*, vol. iii., p. 284.

Chap. xviii., ver. 4.—"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

I. NOTICE the expression, "Whosoever shall humble himself"—it is not *be humble*—"Whosoever shall humble himself." It

implies a process, and then a victory; it recognizes and presupposes a state of pride; it declares humility not a gift, but an attainment, not by nature, but by grace. And this humility is as much better than a natural humility as the grace of God is better than a man's own disposition, or as holiness is superior to innocence.

II. How shall we cultivate it? (1) Be sure that you are loved. We are all inclined to be proud to those whom we think do not like us, and we all can stoop to anything for those of whom we are fond, and of whom we believe they are fond of us. Therefore the first root of humility is love. (2) Realize yourself the object of great mercy. Take your sorrows as a proof of remembrance, and all your blessings as each a mark of an individual favour to you; for this will endear God to you. (3) Be more reverential in your religion, because, if once you can establish the relationship of a true humility to God, it will not be very difficult to go on to be humble to man. He who has once felt as a child to His heavenly Father will be ready to be a child to every one. (4) Do acts of humility. For act feeds feeling as much as feeling nourishes act. God will mark His approbation of acts like these by increasing in you the humility which dictates them, and for the sake of which you have done them.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 235.

**Chap. xviii., ver. 6.—"These little ones."**

I. THE Christian home is an instrument of incalculable power for drawing forth and presenting in their full form and force all those ministering qualities and energies by which, in all ages, society is blessed and saved. But it has a further, deeper, and larger power. It can touch the life of society at the very spring, and renew it. "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," says Christ: "for of such is the kingdom of God." Had the Church understood the words of the Master, and in that mind undertaken the training of these little ones, we should not now be sighing and crying for the signs of the kingdom of heaven among men.

II. The root of the mischief—the fundamental cause of the failure of the Church to make the Gospel the power which God intended it to be in the spiritual education of mankind—is to be found in a radical misconception of the function of the Church. It has sought to rule in His name; it was set to witness to His truth. God has been systematically presented to the mind

of Christendom, and of course to the youth of Christendom, and its homes, as the Ruler, the Lawgiver, the Judge, rather than as the Father; and the Church has been more prompt to wield authority than to minister and save. It is not too much to say that the chief trust of Christendom has been in law, as a power superior to love, in rebuking and destroying that sin from which man must be saved or perish. Never forget that the first, the fundamental principle of a Christian education is the surrounding the young spirit, in the very cradle of its higher life, with the witness that it is born into the Father's home, and that it has a right, in all its struggles, its sufferings, and its sins, to claim the Father's pity, to cry for the Father's help, and to rest on the Father's will and power to save.

III. A second great principle of Christian culture, which the Church has failed to grasp and to wield as a power, is this: Christ bids us remember that men have to be trained here for the universe and eternity, and that the training must begin in the home, if it is to bear any blessed and lasting fruit. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," said the Master. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How much of our education of our children has respect exclusively to the question, What kind of training will most largely and swiftly pay? And our thought concerns not what it will pay the man as an immortal being, with eternity before him to work out the great plan of his existence.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 392.

REFERENCES: xviii. 6.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 48; F. Wagstaff, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 409.

Chap. xviii., ver. 7.—"Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

IF there is any work in the world which peculiarly deserves the name of the work of the devil, it is the hindrance which men sometimes put in the path in which their fellow-creatures are called by God to walk. Of all the temptations which surround us in this world of temptations, the most difficult, in almost all cases, to deal with, are those which our fellow-men cast in our way.

I. The most glaring form of the sin of tempting others is that of persecuting and ridiculing the conscientious. It is almost always easy to find means for doing this. Every one who en-

deavours to live as God would have him is sure to lay himself open to ridicule, if nothing worse. There is mixed up with our very best actions quite enough of weakness, of folly, of human motives, of human self-seeking, to give a good handle to any one who seeks for a handle, and supply materials for a bitter jest, for a scoff, not quite undeserved. How easy it is to ridicule the imperfect virtue, because it is imperfect; how easy, and yet how wicked!

II. Are Christians quite safe from doing this great and sinful mischief? I fear not. (1) In the first place, Christians are not exempt from the common failing of all men, to condemn and dislike everything which is unlike the ordinary fashion of their own lives. (2) Again, Christians are quite as liable as other men to be misled by the customs of their own society, and to confound the laws that have grown up among themselves with the law of God. (3) Again, Christians are very often liable, not, perhaps, to put obstacles in the way of efforts to do right, so much as to refuse them the needful help without which they have little chance of succeeding. (4) Again, Christians are quite as liable as any to give wrong things untrue names, and to take away the fear of sin by a sort of good-natured charity towards particular faults. (5) Lastly, Christians are liable to that which is the common form of tempting among those who are not Christians; not to persecute or ridicule what is right, but to seek for companions in what is wrong. They are tempted, whenever sin is too powerful for their wills, to double it by dragging others with them on the same path.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 166.

I. THE little child is the hero of Christ's panegyric in the context. The little child is the type of the citizen of God's kingdom. Its simplicity, its innocence, its frankness, its trustfulness are the badges of civic privilege in the heavenly polity. And as the little child is the subject of the encomium in the context, so is it also the occasion of the warning in the text. It is the stumbling-block placed in the way of Christ's little ones that calls down the denunciation of woe. We may resent the imputation of a childish nature; we may throw off its nobler characteristics, but its feebler qualities will cling to us still. The category of Christ's little ones is as wide as the Church is wide, as mankind is wide. We are all exposed to the force of some stronger nature than our own—stronger in intellect, or stronger in moral character and definiteness of purpose, or

stronger (it may be) in mere passion of temperament, attracting us to the good or impelling us to the evil.

II. Let no man think that he can escape responsibility in this matter. There is some element of strength in all, even the very weakest. It may be superior intellectual power or high mental culture; it may be a wider acquaintance with the world; it may be a greater force of character; it may be more enlarged religious views: in some way or another each man possesses in himself a force which gives him a power over others, and invests him with a responsibility towards Christ's little ones.

III. Against the perils of influence I know of only one security—the purification, the discipline, the consecration of the man's self. Be assured, if there is any taint of corruption within, it will spread contagion without. It is quite impossible to isolate the inward being from the outward. No man can be always on his guard. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Each one of us carries about with him a moral atmosphere, which takes its character from his inmost self.

BISHOP LIGHTFOOT, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Oct. 26th, 1876.

REFERENCE: xviii. 7.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,579.

Chap. xviii., ver. 10.—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

I. WHAT is meant to be impressed upon us by the text is that in our carelessness about sin and God's service we stand, as it were, alone in creation; that higher beings view with interest every one who is striving to do God's will; that they rejoice over every soul gained over from the cause of evil to the cause of good. We know how worse than indifferent we often are to both these things; that those who are called in the text "little ones," that is, persons with great want of knowledge, and with neither outward circumstances nor force of character to commend them to general notice, but yet really desirous of doing their duty, that these "little ones" we are far from particularly respecting, and farther still from helping them on amidst the difficulties of their way.

II. If we look at what our nature is, and how few set themselves in earnest about renewing it, we may feel quite sure that both we ourselves, and every individual with whom we are acquainted, will meet in the world his share of difficulties and temptations. But let us for ourselves, every one individual amongst us, take heed, for his own personal part, that neither for

himself nor for others does he assist in creating these difficulties and temptations. It is a guilt distinct from the general guilt of our own sins in the sight of God, and one which greatly aggravates that. If we lived alone in the world, then our badness would hurt ourselves only; it would be sin, but it would not be what the Scripture calls "offence;" that is, conduct to hurt the souls of others. But we do not live alone; we cannot act independently of others; our good and evil must have an effect upon them; our good must bring forth fruit in the hearts of others also; our sin must contain that other and deeper guilt of tempting or disposing to sin some of God's little ones.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 193.

REFERENCES: xviii. 10.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 371; A. Mursell, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 8; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 136; H. P. Liddon, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 25; G. Matheson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 370; Bishop Boyd-Carpenter, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 321; M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 40.

### Chap. xviii., vers. 10-14.

THINK of His words, and you will see, first, that Jesus isolates each of us, setting us one by one apart: "despise not *one*;" He is come to save that one; "if one of them be gone astray;" "not His will that *one* should perish." He who counts our hairs much more counts us. Next, you will see that Jesus measures the worth of each human being by God's special and separate care of him. "Despise not one," for his angel is before the Father's face. "Despise not one," for the Son is come to save him. Thus, finally, Jesus having isolated each and weighed the worth of each of us, finds us in His Father's sight equal.

I. Notice, also, those two proofs which Jesus gives us of the rare price at which God prizes each soul of His. He singles out the two classes of men whom we set the least store by, and shows how His Father handles them. There are the little ones whom we despise, and there are the lost ones whom we both despise and dislike. The sin of despising the little ones of God falls mainly, perhaps, on the unconverted man, the sin of repelling lost ones mainly on the Church. But to the despised little ones God does honour, for their angels are such as always see His face; to the disliked lost ones God shows love, for to seek them He sends His Son.

II. Notice in what way it is that the teaching of Jesus has cut the roots from that self-valuing or self-praising which leads

men, and has always led them, to undervalue and despise others. I may seek to sober man's conceit by showing man's littleness at his best, by reminding him how human greatness turns to dust, and how, in spite of wealth, or birth, or fame, or wisdom, men are but poor things while they live, and being dead are equal in their graves. This is the moralist's way; it is not Christ's. No word, scornful or sad, drops from His mouth to lower the dignity or to lessen the worth of the nature He had chosen to wear. He comes to put our self-esteem on its true footing. It is not what is peculiar to you or me which makes either of us precious to God; it is what is common to us all. God is no respecter of persons, but He respects men. We are greater than we thought, but it is a greatness in which we share alike. Because we are men, with a separate personality like God's, with a separate responsibility to God, with an immortal capacity for personal fellowship with God, therefore we are, each of us, creatures of uncountable value, on whom angels may deem it no indignity to wait, and for whom God's Son will not grudge to die.

J. OSWALD DYKES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 307; see also *Sermons*, p. 219.

REFERENCE: xviii. 11.—H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 57.

Chap. xviii., ver. 12.—"If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

I. LOOK at the figure of the one wanderer. (1) All men are Christ's sheep. All men are Christ's, because He has been the Agent of Divine creation, and the grand words of the hundredth Psalm are true about Him, "It is He that hath made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." They are His because His sacrifice has bought them for His. Erring, straying, lost, they still belong to the Shepherd. (2) Notice next the picture of the sheep as wandering. The straying of the poor half-conscious sheep may seem innocent, but it carries the poor thing away from the shepherd as completely as if it had been wholly intelligent and voluntary. Let us learn the lesson. In a world like this, if a man does not know very clearly where he is going he is sure to go wrong. If you do not exercise a distinct determination to do God's will, and to follow in His footsteps who has set us an example, and if your main purpose is to get succulent grass to eat and soft

places to walk in, you are certain, before long, to wander tragically from all that is right, and noble, and pure.

II. Look at the picture of the Seeker. In the text God leaves the ninety and nine, and goes into the mountains where the wanderer is, and seeks him. And thus, couched in veiled form, is the great mystery of the Divine love, the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. Not because man was so great; not because man was so valuable in comparison with the rest of creation—he was but one amongst ninety and nine unfallen and unsinful—but because he was so wretched, because he was so small, because he had gone away so far from God; *therefore* the seeking love came after him, and would draw him to itself.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 267.

REFERENCE: xviii. 12.—R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 373.

Chap. xviii., ver. 14.—"It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

NOTHING impresses us so much with God's inexhaustible love in creation as tracing it into its minute provisions, and searching for its arrangements which escape the common sight of men. However we may fail to reach the extent of that love of creation, one lesson is powerfully impressed upon every reasonable being by such appearances—that it is not the will of our Creator that one of the least of His creatures should perish. Where the farthest and smallest rillets are pure the fountain must be pure also. The creative mind of God is love.

I. When we speak of God's creative love we must infer that human effort is included in that creative love; that when our Creator declared it to be His will that His creatures should not perish He took into account the powers which he bestowed on man. In creation God has ordained that we should be workers together with Him, in carrying out His beneficent purposes.

II. From the world of matter let us pass upwards to the world of spirit. This, too, is God's creation. And here likewise His creative love is equally visible. But here, again, as in creative, so in redemptive love, God distinctly takes into account and weaves into His purposes the agency and diligence of His people. Without man, it is His ordinance that His earth remain untilled, and bring not forth bread to the eater; without man, it is equally His ordinance that spiritual culture shall not take place. We should never, in creation, providence, or grace, sever the love of God from that which it involves, our

own most earnest striving together with Him in the direction of that love; every thwarting and making void of God's love is against ourselves, not against Him. If the husbandman, through idleness or wilfulness, till not his ground, though others so far lose, he is the chief sufferer; if a church, or a family, or an individual work not together with God in His will that none should perish, there may be general loss ensuing, but that church, that family, that man shall bear the chief burden to all eternity.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 257.

CONSIDER the love of God for little children. It is—

I. A love of utter unselfishness.

II. A love of delight in them.

III. A love of compassion towards them.

IV. A love of trust in the almost infinite capacities of children.

T. GASQUOINE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 389.

REFERENCES: xviii. 14.—H. M. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 241; see also *Harrow Sermons*, p. 230; C. Garrett, *Loving Counsels*, p. 161. xviii. 15-20.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 209. xviii. 15-35.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 49.

Chap. xviii., vers. 19, 20.

I. WHEN we consider the great promises which are made to prayer, and particularly the great blessing attached to public worship which the words of the text imply; when we consider, moreover, how sacred and almost Divine the prayers of the Church are, and how these prayers themselves are almost in a manner sanctified, and made more acceptable by the holiness of the places in which we meet together, it is surely a matter greatly worthy of inquiry how it is that Christians in general derive so little benefit from the prayers of the Church, in comparison with what they might in all reason be expected to do. Doubtless the reason is because persons come to church without consideration; they neither think of God nor seriously concerning themselves.

II. It may, indeed, be almost impossible for any one to shut out the world from his thoughts when he comes to church, if he is very much taken up with it at other times; but then when he finds that he is not able to pray on account of wandering thoughts, this ought to remind him that he is in a dangerous and bad way, that there is something wrong in his way of going on. For he may be quite sure if his mind is too distracted to wait

upon God, that he is serving another master. It is evident that our prayers depend upon our manner of life. No one can express wants he does not feel, but he who most feels his want of assistance from God will be sure to pray aright.

III. We cannot doubt but that the words of the text do contain a great and assured truth that, over and above the usual and sure benefits of prayer, where two or three are gathered together in the church, there Christ is in the midst of them, in some mysterious and life-giving manner beyond understanding—present to hear their prayers, present with Divine power to bless them and give them His peace. According as any man lives, so does he pray, and as far as he lives aright he will pray aright; and by prayer—serious and devout prayer—men are brought into some mysterious nearness to the Almighty God; they feel beneath them and around them the everlasting arms.

*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 206.

REFERENCES: xviii. 19.—E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 132; J. Thomas, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 109. xviii. 19, 20.—Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, vol. ii, p. 245.

Chap. xviii., ver. 20.—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

CHRIST with Us.

I. In considering this subject, we must bear in mind that the human nature of our blessed Lord and Master must be subject to those laws of nature which He, as God, hath ordained and decreed. The human nature, being a created nature, cannot be omnipresent; nor is this asserted. But the omnipresence of His human nature is not implied in the promise of our text, although its presence in various places is. It is a presence promised to His Church and people wherever they may be; but this is to be distinguished from that universal presence of the Absolute which is a mystery incomprehensible by the intellect of the creature.

II. Had our Lord remained upon earth, His presence could have been vouchsafed to only a few. When he commissioned His Apostles he breathed upon them, but the breathing of grace is requisite on every soul that it may live, and for that reason our Lord was elevated and placed on His throne of glory. He ascended to that place in the kingdom of heaven, that from thence, the Day-star on high, he might pour down the rays of grace, and through them be present wherever two or three are gathered together in His name.

III. The beams that flow down from the Sun of righteousness are not created beams; they are the sanctifying influences of God the Holy Ghost. Only let us remember that when by the mighty operations of God the Holy Ghost a new light dawns upon the understanding, and a new warmth glows in the heart, and a new power is given to the will, and a new tenderness softens the conscience, and a new creature rises from the putrefying mass of human corruption, susceptible of holy impressions and capable of spiritual affections, it is through the medium of the ever-present Saviour, the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Spirit of God, sent by the Father, passeth into the hearts of His people, to be their Guide and support, their Sanctifier, their Comforter, their Paraclete.

W. F. HOOK, *Parish Sermons*, p. 253.

REFERENCES: xviii. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,761; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 140; H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 202; B. F. Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 115; J. B. French, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 269; C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 1st series, p. 261; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, vol. i., p. 111.

Chap. xviii., ver. 21.—"How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"

I. TO-DAY'S Gospel has a side of comfort to us. It reminds us—it puts the truth in a way that none can possibly mistake—of the largeness, the freeness, of God's forgiveness. "He loosed him, and forgave him the debt." He forgives us from day to day and from hour to hour, and He is not afraid to tell us beforehand—nay, He presses on us as the great hope of our continual repentance and ultimate strength, that we may *count* upon His forgiveness.

II. But the parable has also its side of warning. "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Our Lord is not speaking at the moment of the attitude of human authority towards offenders against law. Nor, again, is He speaking directly of the duty of judging gently the wrong-doings of others. What our Lord is speaking of in this parable is the forgiveness of personal wrongs to ourselves. The lesson of forgiveness begins in repentance, in the new, unselfish, humble heart, which we learn at the cross of Christ.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 196.

REFERENCES: xviii. 21, 22.—R. D. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series. p. 246. xviii. 21-35.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 468

Chap. xviii., vers. 21, 22.

You will not find a single saying of Christ which has any approach to a maxim of morality, or which draws near to a limited opinion on the subjects which belong to religious life, or thought, or feeling. There is nothing He ever said which is to be taken literally, nothing which is not said within the region where the pure imagination is imperial master. Here is an instance in His talk with Peter. Peter wanted a literal statement as to the duty of forgiveness, its practice and its limits. Christ said, "Until seventy times seven." His answer meant there is no limit to forgiveness between man and man.

I. The text speaks of personal forgiveness, not of social or judicial forgiveness. Nor, again, does it tell us to make a man aware that we forgive a wrong done to ourselves unconditionally. There is a condition—that is repentance. We should forgive, be in the loving temper of forgiveness, and that always, but we cannot, with any regard to justice, make that forgiveness known unless there is some sorrow for the wrong.

II. Peter's notion of personal forgiveness was that there was a certain time when we were to stop. It is a plausible view, but a tree is known by its fruits, and its results will tell us whether Peter's notion was right. (1) The first result is hardness of heart. When we cease to forgive, still more when we make it a duty to cease, the temper of forgiveness in us lessens, decays, and finally dies. (2) And the temper of forgiveness is the temper of mercy, pity, and love. With its loss, all these three beautiful sisters are also lost, die, and are buried in our heart. (3) When these three sisters are dead we have no guard against the evils which they oppose.

III. Try Christ's view, too, by its results. (1) We gain moral power in a beautiful thing, and inward joy in it. (2) Having, through this habit of forgiveness, brought love, mercy, and pity as living presences into the soul, they establish rule in it over the evil passions of hatred, envy, revenge, jealousy, and anger, and finally end by slaying them and burying them in the heart. (3) The soul that forgives first learns to love, and secondly spreads a spirit of love.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 67.

REFERENCE: xviii. 21, 22.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part ii., p. 320; A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 22. xviii. 21-35.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 213; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 421; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 150.

Chap. xviii., vers. 23-35.

THE Unmerciful Servant. The key-notes of this parable are to be found at the beginning and end. It was spoken in order to show that a man should set no limit to the forgiveness of injuries; and in order to show this, the parable goes into the deep things of God. It shows that the motive power which can produce in man an unlimited forgiveness of his brother is God's mercy forgiving himself. At the close it lays down the law that the act or habit of extending forgiveness to a brother is a necessary effect of receiving forgiveness from God.

I. The practice of forgiving injuries. The terms employed indicate clearly enough that the injuries which man suffers from his fellow are trifling in amount, especially in comparison of each man's guilt in the sight of God. There is a meaning in the vast and startling difference between ten thousand talents and a hundred pence.

II. The principle of forgiving injuries. Suppose that the methods for practice are accurately laid down, where shall we find a sufficient motive? From an upper spring in heaven the motive must flow; it can be supplied only by God's forgiving love, on us bestowed, and by us accepted. When, like little closed vessels, we are charged by union with the Fountain-head, forgiving love to erring brothers will burst spontaneously from our hearts at every opportunity that opens in the intercourse of life. But there is more in the connection between receiving and bestowing forgiveness than can be expressed by the conception of yielding to the pressure of a motive. It is not only obedience to a command enjoined; it is the exercise of an instinct that has been generated in the new nature. The method in which this and other graces operate is expressed by an Apostle thus: "It is no more that I live, but Christ that liveth in me." When Christ is in you He is in you not only the hope of glory, but also the forgiving of an erring brother.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 185.

REFERENCES: xviii. 23.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 278; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 31. xviii. 23-35.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 175; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 401. xviii. 28.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 190. xviii. 32.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 138. xviii. 32, 33.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and other Sermons*, p. 278.

Chap. xviii., ver. 33.—"Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

FORGIVENESS: one Law for Lord and Servant. This is a parable

to show us that our life must be a repetition of the life of God. It is not a title to a mansion in the skies, nor even possession of that, which can make us Christians. It is possession of God's life. We are to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. We are to forgive, even as God forgives, and to be compassionate, as He is compassionate.

I. Our Lord had been talking of discipline, of giving and forgiving offences; and Peter put the question to Him, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" The answer of the Lord, folded up in this parable, is, "As often as God forgives you."

II. The second lesson fills out and completes the first. It was not simply because he did not resemble his lord that the servant was condemned. It was also because he would not resemble him. But that implies that he had the ability to resemble him; and the parable makes plain to us that he did possess this ability. The whole scope of the parable goes to show that the lord's purpose in remitting the ten thousand talents was the bestowal of this power to forgive. And therefore I put the second lesson of the parable into this shape: God's mercy to us is to be a spring of mercy in us to others. We are receivers mainly that we may be givers. We are ourselves forgiven that we may in turn forgive.

III. The third lesson is, We must take the entire gift or lose all. The entire gift of the king was something more than forgiveness. It was also a forgiving heart. If we shut out mercy from our hearts, if we from our hearts forgive not, we shall by mercy be ourselves shut out. Pardon of our sins is not salvation: there must be life as well as pardon. We live only when God's life has become ours. And our life grows spiritually only as we practise the life of God. If we do not open our hearts to it, or if, having opened our hearts, we do not follow its leadings, we fall back into a deeper condemnation.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 100.

REFERENCES: xviii. 35.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 445; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 337. xix. 1-26.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 251. xix. 11.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 88. xix. 13.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 342. xix. 13-15.—P. Robertson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 37.

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Chap. xix., ver. 14.—"For of such is the kingdom of heaven."

A CHRISTIAN must be like a little child. There is very great cause why we should press this thought upon ourselves now.

For we are fallen on most unchildlike days. The very children are not childlike. An age partially, but not entirely educated—rather, but not very, learned, an age of transition, an age proud of its science and its talent, a fast age, can never be a childlike age. Look at some of the features of the little child which we have to copy.

I. As respects faith. No one can have had much to do with a very young child without being struck with the particular character of its trust. The chief reason why a child's trust is so great is that it has nothing to do with the intellect: it is simply affection; it believes because it loves, and leans because it is fond. There is a great deal of true philosophy here. Faith is a feeling of the heart, and the more you love the more you will believe. Hence the large faith of a little child. You cannot know infinitely, but you can love infinitely. If the faith be in proportion to the knowledge, it can never be very great. If the faith be in proportion to the love, it will be exceedingly great.

II. Little children live in the present moment. They have few memories, and what future there is, is all sunny. A child's joy is always longer than a child's sorrow. I wish we could all do the same—have very few retrospects, and no dark anticipations, and no anxieties. Then what energy it would give, what ecstasy to to-day's duty, to-day's cross, to-day's pleasure, and how free the soul would be for the real to-morrow of eternity.

III. A child's mind has a wonderful power of realization. Whatever is said to it, it does more than picture it; it makes substance of it, and immediately it becomes a living thing to the child. And this is just what we ought to do about the invisible world. The unseen is really more than the seen. And yet, who treats what he cannot touch and see as he does the material world around him? To whom is heaven like an estate of which he has just got possession a little way off, who holds the protection of angels as if he saw an army about him? Who looks for the Advent as he expects the return of a friend?

IV. A little child is a thing new-born. So it must be with you. Ye must be born again.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 136.

REFERENCES: xix. 14.—L. D. Bevan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 280; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 154; W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 494.

Chap. xix., ver. 16.—"And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

CONSIDER this story as giving us a lesson concerning the

connection between the hope of eternal life, or everlasting happiness, and the performance of good works.

I. I suppose that the young man in the story thoroughly believed that the eternal life of which he spoke was the greatest blessing which he could obtain. Moreover, he did not think eternal life an easy thing to be obtained; he had realized to a considerable extent the truth that the way of life is narrow and the way of destruction broad, and he did not think that the question of his everlasting peace was one which might be safely left to take care of itself, and that if he did not grievously trample on the commandments he would at least fare as well as his neighbours. The Lord tells him of a path by following which he might ensure the end he had in view; it was a proposal to allow of a barter (so to speak) in this particular case, of present wealth and ease for the promised treasure of heaven. And the great moral of the story is this, that the young man *would not make the exchange.*

II. Let us take the story as a proof that it is possible for a man to have treasure in heaven promised to him on the condition of his making the sacrifice of all his earthly wealth, and of the offer being refused. And this fact may serve as an answer to those who have objected to the Christian religion, as letting down the character of virtue by assigning rewards for the practice of it. The fear of those being bribed into holiness by the same hope of gain in heaven who would otherwise have been content to lead unholy lives, is a fear which philosophers may talk about, but for which common life will not give any colour or ground.

III. We do need something more than the mere hope of reward to enable us to do any great Christian act, and the religion of Christ does supply such a motive, and the New Testament represents the Apostles as acting upon that motive. If you inquire what the principle was which made the Apostles what they were, you can have no doubt in giving as an answer that it was the "constraining love of Christ."

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 198.

REFERENCES: xix. 16.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 154. xix. 16. to xx. 16.—H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 401.

### Chap. xix., vers. 16-22.

I. CONSIDER that a single mote may hinder a man from becoming a true Christian. It is the things which are ap-

parently the smallest that prevent the greatest results. A slight defect in the finest bell and it ceases to sound, a lost key and the richest money-chest is useless. The day of battle has arrived, the troops are admirably disposed, the despatches of the general fly here and there; suddenly the horse of the adjutant stumbles on a stone; he arrives a quarter of an hour too late, and the battle is lost. So it is in spiritual matters. Many a man who has got safely over the Rhine has been drowned in a little brook. Sin has no more dangerous delusion than to convince a man that he is safe if only he avoids the so-called flagrant transgressions. We see this in the case of the young man in the Gospel. He thinks he has kept all the commandments which the Lord names to him. He is evidently a youth of earnest and noble disposition. The question, "What good thing must I do, that I may have eternal life?" was no mere idle phrase, but a question of conscience. Otherwise, how differently our Lord would have regarded him! The very command, "Go and sell that which thou hast," rests on the assumption that he was no mere common miser. Our Lord points out to him that his heart is not yet fixed exclusively on God, that it is still divided between God and the good things of this world. And because of this mote, the door of eternal life, the latch of which is already in his hand, refuses to open.

II. Consider next why this is so. I answer, because if the mote is an unconscious sin, then, as in the case of this youth, repentance is lacking; if a conscious sin, the confidence of faith. Repentance and faith, these are the two parts of conversion, without which no man enters the kingdom of heaven. The young man was grieved. It was merely a mote which the Lord pointed out to him, but to a disposition like his it was enough. In that one evil speck he understands how it is with his heart as a whole.

III. How can this state of things be remedied? First, we must recognize that, if prayer and faith will not open the door, the reason cannot be in the door itself, for over it the words are written, "Come, ye weary and heavy-laden." Some sin must have thrust itself in and hindered our entrance. "Cut it off and cast it from thee." The motes conceal the secret of salvation from your eyes, and you shall find no rest of soul while you seek to serve two masters. Our Lord said, "Sell all that thou hast." And He allows the youth whom He so loved to depart, and we do not learn that he ever returned. We see then how earnest the

Lord's meaning was when He said, "Cut it off and cast it from thee."

A. THOLUCK, from the *Gewissens-Glaubens und Gelegenheits Predigten*, p. 193.

**Chap. xix., ver. 17.—"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."**

How are we sinners to be accepted by Almighty God? Doubtless the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the meritorious cause of our justification, and His Church is the ordained instrument of conveying it to us. But our present question relates to another subject, to our own part in appropriating it, and here I say Scripture makes two answers, saying sometimes, "Believe, and you shall be saved," and sometimes, "Keep the commandments, and you shall be saved." Let us consider whether these two modes of speech are not reconcilable with each other.

I. What is meant by faith? It is to feel in good earnest that we are creatures of God; it is a practical perception of the unseen world; it is to understand that this world is not enough for our happiness, to look beyond it on towards God, to realize His presence, to wait upon Him, to endeavour to learn and do His will, and to seek our good from Him. It is not a mere temporary strong act or impetuous feeling of the mind, an impression or a view coming upon it, but it is a habit, a state of mind lasting and consistent.

II. What is obedience? It is the obvious mode suggested by nature of a creature's conducting himself in God's sight, who fears him as his Maker, and knows that, as a sinner, he has a special cause for fearing Him. Under such circumstances he will do what he can to please Him, as the woman whom our Lord commended. And he will find nothing better as an offering, or as an evidence, than obedience to that holy law which conscience tells him has been given us by God Himself; that is, he will be delighted in doing his duty as far as he knows and can do it. Thus, as is evident, the two states of mind are altogether one and the same; it is quite indifferent whether we say a man seeks God in faith, or say he seeks Him by obedience; and whereas Almighty God has graciously declared that He will receive and bless all that seek Him, it is quite indifferent whether we say He accepts those who believe, or those who obey. To believe is to look beyond this world to God, and to obey is to look beyond this world to God; to believe is of the heart, and to obey is of the heart; to believe is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of trust; and to obey is not a

solitary act, but a consistent habit of doing our duty in all things.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 77.

REFERENCES: xix. 17.—F. W. Farrar, *Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 220; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 12; H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 195. xix. 18.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 363. xix. 19.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 61; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 145; J. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 157.

Chap. xix., ver. 20 (R.V.).—"The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet?"

"WHAT lack I yet?" This question is asked by various distinct classes of men.

I. The first class ask the question, but they understand it wrongly. Do we not all ask, What lack I yet? Who does not feel that something is lacking to him? All that makes our earthly life lovely and pleasant, the joys and possessions of life—these are what we lack. But is this an answer worthy of a human soul? No, the question must be taken in a *moral* sense. What lack I yet in my moral character? What is wanting to make my life truly worthy of a man? Thus the question gains a serious meaning which at first was absent from it.

II. There are others who know well where to look for the true standard for humanity; they seek in God, in whose image we are created, in Him alone, the holy, pure, and just. What was it that was lacking to this youth and to all who ask his question? The answer is not hard to find; a *Redeemer* is what humanity needs, such a Redeemer as has come into the world. Well for him who bends the knee before Him, and surrenders himself into the gracious hands of the Redeemer; for him the question is answered, he has what man requires, even eternal life.

III. Yet even this is not a full and perfect answer. Even those who believe Christ have a great and decisive step to take. "Sell that thou hast, . . . and come, follow Me." Deny thyself and thy worldly lusts, and believe in Jesus. Despise and cast away from thee all that is not Jesus, and that strives against Him. "Come, follow Me." What is this but a following to thorns and to the cross? What but a self-surrender in self-sacrificing, self-denying love? This is the goal to which Christ would have us attain; to be free altogether from self, to forget self altogether in love.

R. ROTHE, *Nachgelassene Predigten*, p. 24.

REFERENCES: xix. 20.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*,

vol. xi., p. 291; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 102; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 184. xix. 21.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 229; G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 1; W. J. Keay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 269; J. W. Thew, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 257.

Chap. xix., ver. 22.—"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."

I. CONSIDER the young man's sorrow. It was not quite so simple as at first sight appears. No doubt partly he was sorry (1) at the thought of giving up those large possessions of which he was naturally fond. But sorrow is seldom a single principle. It scarcely admits of a question that the young ruler was also grieved (2) at the idea of losing heaven. There had opened upon his mind some of the difficulty which there always is in the attainment of everything which is really worth having. The eternal life, which his ardent feelings had pictured to him as something easy and near at hand, seemed to retire back from him behind the mountains of self-sacrifice which Christ laid across his path. (3) Part of his sorrow was the discovery which he was making at that moment of his own heart. He went away most sorrowful of all in the wretched sense he had of his own guilty hesitation and his own inexcusable weakness.

II. The heaviness, then, of that man's heart was, we believe, yet in the main a right heaviness. At least, there was some grace in it. Can we believe that ever any one on whom Jesus once looked lovingly finally perished? No; rather we confidently trust and hope that ere long that discipline to which Christ subjected his soul wrought its own purifying work, and that, weighing in truer balances, he learnt what is the real secret of power—to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

III. In every state of life the characteristic of a Christian is self-renunciation. Always lean towards the position that your Master took, and which your Master taught in this world. Always, in everything, cultivate simplicity; always combat selfishness; be always increasing your charities; be always loosening yourself from the things of sense and time; and be always sitting, free to follow Christ whenever He shall lead you up to a higher walk.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 20.

REFERENCES: xix. 22.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 35. xix. 24.—F. W. Farrar, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 369; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 164. xix. 27-9

—S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, pp. 203, 228; A. B Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 262; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 256. xix. 27-30.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 23. xix. 29.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,661.

Chap. xix., ver. 30.—"Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

THE Weapons of Saints.

I. These words are fulfilled under the Gospel in many ways. In the context they embody a great principle, which we all, indeed, acknowledge, but are deficient in mastering. Under the dispensation of the Spirit all things were to become new, and to be reversed. Strength, numbers, wealth, philosophy, eloquence, craft, experience of life, knowledge of human nature, these are the means by which worldly men have ever gained the world. But in that kingdom which Christ has set up, all is contrariwise. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." What before was in honour has been dishonoured: what before was in dishonour has come to honour. Weakness has conquered strength, for the hidden strength of God "is made perfect in weakness." Spirit has conquered flesh, for that spirit is an inspiration from above.

II. Since Christ sent down gifts from on high, the saints are ever taking possession of the kingdom, and with the weapons of saints. The visible powers of the heavens—truth, meekness, and righteousness—are ever coming in upon the earth; ever pouring in, gathering, thronging, warring, triumphing, under the guidance of Him who is "alive and was dead, and is alive for evermore."

III. We have most of us by nature longings more or less and aspirations after something greater than this world can give. In early youth we stand by the side of the still waters, with our hearts beating high, with longings after our unknown good, and with a sort of contempt for the fashions of the world—with a contempt for the world, even though we engage in it. While our hearts are thus unsettled Christ comes to us, if we will receive Him, and promises to satisfy our great need—this hunger and thirst which wearies us. He says, You are seeking what you see not, I give it you; you desire to be great, I will make you so. But observe how—just in the reverse way to what you expect. The way to real glory is to become unknown and despised.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 313.

PERHAPS there is hardly any person of reflection to whom the

thought has not occurred at times of the final judgment turning out to be a great subversion of human estimates of men. Such an idea would not be without support from some of those characteristic prophetic sayings of our Lord, which, like the slanting strokes of the sun's rays across the clouds, throw forward a track of mysterious light athwart the darkness of the future. Such is that saying in which a shadow of the Eternal Judgment seems to come over us: "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

I. One source of mistake in human judgment is, that while the Gospel keeps to one point in its classification of men, namely, the motive by which alone it decides their character, the mass of men in fact find it difficult to do so. They have not that firm hold of the moral idea which prevents them from wandering from it; and being diverted by irrelevant considerations, they think of the spirituality of a man as belonging to the department to which he is attached, the profession he makes, the subject matter he works upon, the habitual language he has to use.

II. Nothing is easier, when we take gifts of the intellect and imagination in the abstract, than to see that these do not constitute moral goodness. This is indeed a mere truism; and yet, in the concrete, it is impossible not to see how nearly they border upon counting as such; to what advantage they set off any moral good there may be in a man; sometimes even supplying the absence of real good with what looks extremely like it. There enters thus unavoidably often into a great religious reputation a good deal which is not religion, but power.

III. On the other hand—while the open theatre of spiritual power and energy is so accessible to corrupt motives, which, though undermining its truthfulness, leave standing all the brilliance of its outer manifestation—let it be considered what a strength and power of goodness may be accumulating in unseen quarters. The way in which man bears temptation is what decides his character; yet how secret is the system of temptation! Some one who did not promise much comes out at a moment of trial strikingly and favourably. The act of the thief on the cross is a surprise. Up to the time when he was judged he was a thief, and from a thief he became a saint. For even in the dark labyrinth of evil there are unexpected outlets. Sin is established by habit in the man, but the good principle which is in him also, but kept down and suppressed, may be secretly growing too; it may be undermining it, and extracting the life and force from it. In this man, then, sin becomes more and

more, though holding its place by custom, an outside and coating, just as virtue does in the deteriorating man, till at last, by a sudden effort, and the inspiration of an opportunity, the strong good casts off the weak crust of evil, and comes out free. We witness a conversion.

J. B. MOZLEY, *University Sermons*, p. 72.

I. THE parable of the labourers in the vineyard is a simple and natural one, and teaches that God regards only our availing ourselves of our opportunities, and using those opportunities aright which He has given us.

II. The contrast which presents itself at the end of the day is not between the sum paid the different classes, but between the spirit which has been gradually developed and cherished in them. Those who have had a whole day full of labour, and full of the hopeful confidence which full and honest labour should give—a day free from anxiety and despair—they are infinitely the worst characters in the end. So it often is—the first in opportunity are last in results; the last in opportunity are first in fitness for the kingdom.

T. T. SHORE, *The Life of the World to Come*, p. 139.

REFERENCES: xix. 30.—G. Salmon, *Non-Miraculous Christianity*, p. 223; E. M. Goulburn, *The Acts of the Deacons*, p. 21; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 272; *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 26; S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 239. xix.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 60. xx. 1.—W. Gresley, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 363; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 90; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,355. xx. 1, 2.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 129. xx. 1-?, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 664. xx. 1-8.—T. Rowsell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 81.

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**Chap. xx., vers. 1-16.**

THE Labourers in the Vineyard.

I. This parable is directed against a wrong temper and spirit of mind, which was notably manifested among the Jews, but one against which all men in possession of spiritual privileges have need to be, and herein are, warned; this warning being primarily addressed not to them, but to the Apostles, as the foremost workers in the Christian Church, the earliest called to labour in the Lord's vineyard, "the first" both in time and in toil and pains. They had seen the rich young man go sorrowful away, unable to abide the proof by which the Lord had mercifully revealed to him how strong were the bands by which the world was holding him still. They (for Peter here, as so often, is

spokesman for all) would fain know what their reward should be, who had done this very thing from which he had shrunk, and forsaken all for the Gospel's sake. The Lord answers them first and fully, that they and as many as should do the same for His sake should reap an abundant reward.

II. But for all this the question, "What shall we have?" was not a right one; it put their relation to their Lord on a wrong footing. There was a tendency in it to bring their obedience to a calculation of—so much work, so much reward. There lurked, too, a certain self-complacency in it. In this parable the Apostles are taught that, however long-continued their work, abundant their labours, yet without charity to their brethren, and humility before God, they are nothing; that pride and a self-complacent estimate of their work, like the fly in the precious ointment, would spoil the work, however great it might be, since that work stands only in humility, and from first they would fall to last. The lesson taught to Peter, and through him to us all, is that the first may be altogether last; that those who stand foremost as chief in labour, yet if they forget that the reward is of grace and not of works, and begin to boast and exalt themselves above their fellow-labourers, may altogether lose the things which they have wrought; while those who seem last may yet, by keeping their humility, be acknowledged first and foremost in the day of God.

R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 168.

REFERENCES: xx. 1-16.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 272; *Ibid.*, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 183; R. Calderwood, *The Parables of our Lord*, p. 291; G. Calthrop, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., pp. 55, 496; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 82; W. Sanday, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 81; F. T. Hill, *Ibid.*, p. 427; Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 72. xx. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 114.

Chap. xx., vers. 6, 7.—**"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them Why stand ye here all the day idle?" etc.**

I. IF we would hear, surely we might rather say that God calls us, at all times, in all places; by all things, persons, deeds, words; by night and by day, all our lives long, than dare to say for ourselves before God's all-searching eye: "No man hath heard us." For so it is when persons have heard the first call; everything calls them when the heart is awake; every, the lowest, whisper calls it. The world is one great mirror. As we are who look into it or on it, so it is to us. It gives us back ourselves. It speaks to us the language of our own hearts; our

inmost self is the key to all. The heart where God dwelleth is in all things called anew by God. His blessed presence draws it by its sweetness; or His seeming absence may, by the very void, absorb it yet more, by the vehemence of longing, into Himself.

II. He bids us "Go work in My vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." He promises not to us, as to those first labourers, a certain hire. Even while He would wholly restore us to His mercy He would keep us in the humility of penitents. He seems to tells us thus: that we have forfeited our claim, that we must labour on in faith and hope and confiding trust, making no bargains, as it were, with Him, looking for nothing again but what He of His free bounty will give us. This is our very hope and trust and gladness in our toil, that we labour not with any calculating spirit, or to set up for ourselves any claim with God; the rewards of desert were finite; the reward of grace infinite, even Himself, who hath said, "I am thine exceeding great reward."

III. He calleth thee now: He calleth thee, that in death He may again call thee to place thee near Himself: He calleth thee that He may save thee from the pit where His voice is not heard, to place thee above the stars, with cherubim and seraphim, there to sing everlastingly, "Holy, holy, holy." Such is the hire which God offereth thee. What were it, could Satan offer thee not this earth only, but countless worlds? Things out of God may take thee up; nought but God can fill thee. He calleth thee, "Son, give Me thine heart;" and He will give thee His own all-encompassing, unencompassed love

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 133.

REFERENCES: xx. 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 26; H. J. Wilmot Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 106; J. Keble, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. iii., p. 85. xx. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 357. xx. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 108. xx. 9-11.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 86. xx. 10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 473; vol. viii., p. 133. xx. 11-15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 105; S. Cox, *Expositions*, vol. iv., p. 208. xx. 15.—A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 239; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 77. xx. 16.—S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, pp. 239, 251; J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. iii., pp. 1, 10, 21; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 205. xx. 17-28.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 282. xx. 17-34.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 81.

Chap. xx., vers. 20-23 (with Mark x., vers. 35-40).

I. COMPARING St. Matthew's and St. Mark's accounts, we see

that it was the mother and sons together who made the request. It is a homely human picture of ambition—hers for them and herself in them; theirs for themselves though with an eagerness, stimulated it may be by the desire to delight and elevate her. The childlike simplicity with which the request is made, in evident unconsciousness of its deep and solemn connections, is very notable and attractive. They wanted the promise beforehand. They wanted, as it might seem, to surprise Him into granting their request, as a confiding child may seek, half in earnest, half in sport, to entrap a tender and indulgent parent. They knew not what they asked, but there is a charm, there is even something of example, in the freedom of their asking.

II. There is no favouritism, no partiality, no promotion by interest in the kingdom of Christ. There is no caprice in the placing of the highest and lowest in it. The answer to the question, to whom the precedence in the kingdom shall be given, is one and the same with that to the question for whom the kingdom of heaven is prepared. The inheritance belongs to a certain character, so does the precedence; every single citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem has his place prepared for him, not only for what, but by what he is. There is a character now forming amid the turmoil and conflict of this lower world, for which eternal precedence is prepared by the necessary self-executing law of spiritual life in which the will—that is, the character—of the Father of spirits is reflected. The nearest to Christ in His glory will be those who are nearest Him in action and character.

III. This incident as a whole contains no condemnation of ambition. There is an ambition which belongs to the true disciple, which exercises the Christian virtues and does Christ's work in the world. It is an ambition not for place, but for character. It aspires not to have, but to be; and to be that it may work, that it may serve, that it may impart even of its very self. If it be the case that many of us are wanting in this ambition, if aspiration after the closest possible nearness to Christ, under the sense that nearness means likeness, be almost unknown to us, if we are satisfied with the hope of freedom from suffering and enjoyment of happiness, this will go far to account for the insufficient power of Christianity to leaven society, as well as for the poverty of individual Christian life.

W. ROMANES, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, March 2nd, 1882.

**REFERENCE**: **xx. 20-8.**—*Clergyman's Magazine*, **vol. iii., p. 11.**

Chap. xx., ver. 21 (with Luke ix., ver. 38).

THESE are two examples of intercessory prayer. All the principles on which we explain or defend prayer, as the communing in Christ's spirit of submission, refer also to those prayers which we offer for others.

I. Take first the prayer of Salome for her sons. There were two entirely false conceptions lying at the root of her prayer. (1) She was wrong as to the nature of the kingdom of their Lord. She thought of it as an earthly kingdom, like that of David. (2) She was mistaken, also, as to the principles of Divine election and reward in Christ's kingdom. She evidently thought that places of high honour—the right and left hand of some real throne—were to be bestowed according to some caprice of favouritism. And her idea of prayer was, that it could win something of this kind from the Lord.

It may have seemed to the mother at the moment as if her prayer had been refused. It was *not* granted according to her own narrow, fatal estimate of what she desired for her sons. It was granted with a fulness and a power that she did not conceive then, but which may have dawned upon her as, with Mary, she stood beside the cross on Calvary. The opportunity of serving and suffering for Christ was given them. That was the only way the prayer could be granted. St. James was the first Apostle Martyr and St. John the last.

II. There were petitions for others offered to Christ while on earth of a different kind to those which Salome presented for her sons—prayers that were answered and granted by the Lord just as they were prayed.

In that other instance of a parent's prayer, given in St. Luke ix. 38, it was, indeed, for a child to be delivered only from bodily infirmity; but yet as we fondly believe that all Christ's healing of bodily diseases has a sacramental significance, and points to the deeper healing of the sickness of the soul, we may trust that He will ever thus still answer our prayers for others.

T. T. SHORE, *Some Difficulties of Belief*, p. 61.

REFERENCE: xx. 21, 22.—F. W. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 200.

Chap. xx., ver. 22.—"Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able."

EVEN these great Apostles whom, from the ardent glow of their impetuous love, our Lord calls "Sons of Thunder," were, before

the descent of the Holy Ghost, deceived in two ways. (1) They thought that our Lord would bestow by favour the glories of His kingdom and nearness to Himself. (2) They were mistaken as to themselves, and their own power to endure that hardness through which they were to enter into eternal bliss. In a word, they knew fully neither their master nor themselves.

I. The last thing in heaven or earth, which man by nature desires to know, is that which most concerns him: himself, his very self. Man will interest himself about all things around him. He will be curious to know the news of the day, what is passing in other countries, or perhaps the works of God, the courses of the stars or of the winds, the history of past ages, the structure of the world or even of the human mind, or the evil of his neighbour. One thing, unless touched by the grace of God, he will not wish to know—nay, he will strive to forget, to bury it amid the knowledge of the things which he knows—the state of his own soul.

II. If we know not ourselves we cannot know God, nor love God, nor become like Him. If we know not what is so nigh to us as our own souls, made in His image, how can we know Him who made them, who made, and who fills heaven and earth? If we understand not the least how can we understand the Infinite?

III. Men think that they know themselves because they are themselves. And yet of others we are all ready to think that they do not know themselves. Surely, if many so saw their own faults as others see them, they would be at more pains, by God's grace, to subdue them. Thou must examine thyself—not by the examples of those around thee, nor by the maxims of the world; not heeding the praise which men give thee, but by the light of God's endowments.

E. B. PUSEY, *Selected Occasional Sermons*, p. 61.

REFERENCES: xx. 22.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 70; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 18; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 173.

Chap. xx., vers. 22, 23.

LAW and Prayer.

To think that nothing can be too good for their children is an amiable weakness few mothers can resist. Salome had heard Christ discourse of a kingdom which He was about to establish. There would be places and preferments at His disposal, and who so fit to possess them as her own sons? A little forwardness in asking might secure a prize, and so she said to Jesus,

"Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." Our Lord answers, "To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father." In other words, our Lord says, "It is Mine to give to these, but it is not Mine to give without regard to the will of My Father; not Mine to give to any who may ask for it, but who have not the proper preparation."

I. From these words of our Lord we get a principle, which the students of physical phenomena are perpetually asserting as though it were their peculiar discovery, that the Almighty has chosen to proceed in His dealings with His creatures according to a regular and uniform order; that He does not break this order, or interfere with this method, or give up His will, simply because a frail foolish mortal may ask Him to do so. The text reveals to us a law or regular method of Divine action, and by consequence that there are things which do not belong to the region of prayer.

II. The question is not of God's omnipotence, but of His will. The existence of God being granted, every man, whether he be a Christian or not, makes no doubt that God can do whatsoever pleaseth Him. In our ignorance we often make the mistake which was made by Salome, and ask for that which may not be ours. If our ignorance be our misfortune and not our fault, He who looks "with larger, other eyes than ours," to make allowance for us all, will not treat us sternly because we have made a child's blunder. But when, by one way or another, from the Bible, or from the world around us, we have discovered God's purpose and will, then we do not ask Him to change it, but to help us to bear or to fulfil it. Until we clearly and distinctly know what God's good pleasure is concerning us, it remains our soothing and hopeful privilege to tell Him everything, our secret wishes and desires, the things we so much long for.

III. Prayer is not a mere piece of mental machinery for obtaining some temporal advantage for which material appliances are insufficient. The kingdom of heavan is not a mere union-house, from which the idle and the improvident, and indeed all comers, may get a passing relief. Prayer is the communion of the soul with God, its repose upon infinite love. In a new joy as well as in a blinding reverse, in the weariness and rustiness of too often repeated pleasures, in the gnawing dissatisfaction of conscious failure, and on the high places of

success, to poor humble people as well as the solitary great ones of earth, there comes the need of prayer and the crying for God: "O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee: in a barren and dry land, where no water is."

W. PAGE ROBERTS, *Law and God*, p. 14.

Chap. xx., ver. 23.—"To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father."

I. THESE words contain, first, the principle that some will be nearer Christ than others in the heavenly kingdom. The words of our Lord do not merely imply, by the absence of all hint, that these men's petition was impossible, the existence of degrees among the subjects of His heavenly kingdom, but articulately affirm that such variety is provided for by the preparation of the Father. Does not the very idea of an endless progress in that kingdom involve this variety in degree? We do not think of men passing into the heavens and being perfected by a bound, so that there shall be no growth. And if they each grow through all the ages, and are ever coming nearer and nearer to Christ, that seems necessarily to lead to the thought that this endless progress, carried on in every spirit, places them at different points of approximation to the one centre. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," is the law for the incompleteness of earth: "Having then gifts differing according to the glory that is given to us," will be the law for the perfection of the heavens.

II. These words rightly understood assert the truth that Christ is the Giver of each of these various degrees of glory and blessedness. To deny or to doubt that Christ is the Giver of the blessedness, whatsoever the blessedness may be, that fills the hearts and souls of the redeemed, is to destroy His whole work, to destroy all the relations upon which our hopes rest, and to introduce confusion and contradiction into the whole matter. There is nothing within the compass of God's love to bestow of which Christ is not the Giver. He is the Giver of heaven and everything else which the soul requires.

III. The words lead us to the further thought, that these glorious places are not given to mere wishing, nor by mere arbitrary will. Christ could not, if He would, take a man to His right hand whose heart was not the home of simple trust and thankful love, whose nature and desires were unprepared for that blessed world.

IV. These glorious places are given as the result of a Divine preparation. "To them for whom it is prepared of My Father." There is a twofold Divine preparation of the heavens for men. (1) One is from of old, in the eternal counsel of the Divine love. (2) The other is the realization of that eternal purpose in time through the work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 351.

REFERENCES: xx. 24.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 31; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 20. xx. 25-7.—J. M. Wilson, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 72.

**Chap. xx., vers. 26-28.—"Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;" etc.**

I. THESE words have something to tell us of the nature of true greatness. Though Christ does not ignore intellects, or even riches, He yet regards these things, and all things like these, as but instruments; and he is, in the gospel sense of the word, the greatest who uses all such gifts or possessions in the service of mankind. If this view of the case be correct, one or two inferences of importance follow from it. (1) It is evident that he who wins this greatness does not win it at the expense of others. (2) It follows, further, that we may win this greatness anywhere. (3) It follows, thirdly, that this greatness is satisfying to its possessor.

II. The text has something to say to us, in the next place, about the model of true greatness. "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." In one point of view the greatness of God is that of service. All things depend on Him. He holds the planets in their orbits. He rules the changing year. The highest of all is the servant of all. But striking as the nobleness and the divinity of service appear, when we look thus at the universal ministry of God, we have a more impressive illustration of the same thing in the mission and work of the Lord Jesus. In creation and providence God lays nothing aside. But in redemption it was different. To deliver man from the guilt and power of sin it was needed that the Son of God should become a man, and, after a life of obedience, should submit to a death of shame; and *there* was sacrifice. When that was done Jehovah rendered the highest service to humanity and gave a pattern of the loftiest greatness.

III. This text has something to say to us about the motive

to true greatness. We are to seek it for the sake of Him who gave Himself for us. Jesus does not say in so many words, "Serve one another, because I have served you;" but still the reference which He makes to His death, as an example, brings before every Christian's mind the magnitude of the obligation under which Christ has laid him.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds and Other Sermons*, p. 215.

**Chap. xx., ver. 27.—"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."**

I. THE answer of our Lord is entirely at variance with the law of the children of this world. Greatness in this world is universally sought by exalting a man's self; more wealth, more power, more esteem among men, a grander display and more profuse luxuries—these are landmarks in the world's path to greatness. And no wonder, for the world is naturally selfish, and all its practice, however varnished over by civilization and religion, is but refined selfishness still. It is not only unwittingly that the world acts counter to our Saviour's rule, but deliberately and habitually.

II. "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," etc. This example is of immense importance. If it had not existed, it might have been said, The rule is metaphorical, to be understood figuratively; it means that a humble spirit is the way to advancement in Christ's kingdom, not that any outward conduct showing humiliation is required. Jesus Christ would be chief among us, and He became our servant. Ye who are ambitious look upon Him, He recognises your upward impulse. It is a noble endeavour, to rise. Eminence is a legitimate object; "forward," a watchword worthy of the Christian soldier. But let it be well understood what this eminence is; towards what this forward endeavour is to be directed. The Saviour of sinners is your pattern. Like that Saviour become a servant.

III. Let it be with each of us a subject of serious inquiry whether our religion will stand this test; whether we are making ourselves the servants of others for their good, after the pattern of Christ, or are spending our labours in self-advancement. To become the servants of all, for their temporal and spiritual welfare, may be accounted worldly folly, but it will be heavenly wisdom. And when the world has passed away and man's final state arrives, our object will not have passed, but will then be first gained: to reach Him after whom

we have been striving, to awake up after His long-sought likeness, and be satisfied.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 51.

**Chap. xx., ver. 28.—"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

THE Meekness of God.

Here is a text that speaks home at once and with ease. It runs on our levels; it speaks in a language understood of all.

I. Everyone knows the arrogance and the insolence of the kings of the Gentiles who exercise lordship over their fellows. And it is in delightful and enticing contrast to this that we turn to greet, with heart and soul, the sweet coming of Him, the human-hearted, the tender Master of all loving-kindness, and all patience, and all goodness, and all long-suffering—the Son of Man. The Son of Man came to minister. He had seen an opportunity of giving, of helping, and so He came.

II. Of giving what? Himself. His service was to be utterly unstinted. He would go the whole length with it. He saw that we should demand from Him all that He had; that we should use up His very life; that we should never let Him stop, or stay, or rest, while we saw a chance of draining His succouring stores. And yet He came; even His life He would lay down for our profit. He came as the good Giver, as the Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep.

III. And it is this, His character, which draws us under the sway of His gracious lordship. This is the allurement of Christ, by which His sheep are drawn after His feet; how can they resist the call of One who serves them so loyally? Every sound of His voice has in it the ring of that true-hearted devotion which would lay down life itself to save them from harm. And yet it is just this winning charm of which we miss often the true force. For do we not associate it entirely with what we call the humanity of the Lord? But that winning grace has in it the potency of God Himself. It is the manifestation of the Word, the revelation of what God is in Himself. If Jesus, the Man, is tender and meek, then God, the Word, is meek and tender; God, the Word, is sympathetic, and gentle, and humble, and forgiving, and loyal, and loving, and true. It is God, the Word, who cannot restrain Himself for love of us, and comes with overwhelming compassion to seek and save the lost; God, the Eternal Word, who longs to win the heart of publican and sinner. The Son of Man is the Son of God; and, therefore, we

know and thank God for it, that it is the blessed nature of the Son Himself, in His eternal substance, which found its true and congenial delight in coming, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND, *Logic and Life*, p. 227.

REFERENCES: **xx. 28.**—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 181; J. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 317; W. G. Blaikie, *Glimpses of the Inner Life of our Lord*, p. 97; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 42, *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xix., p. 210; A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 339; *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 27; W. H. Murray, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 441.

Chap. xx., ver. 31 (with Luke xix., ver. 3; Mark ii., ver. 4; Luke viii., ver. 45) —"The multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace."

CROWDS around Christ. Crowds gathered daily around Jesus Christ. He was thronged, pressed, almost persecuted, by the ever-accumulating multitudes. It is evident that this was not always, if it was ever, an advantage. The crowd was rather hindersome than helpful.

I. What of the crowds around Jesus Christ to-day? Who are they, and what is their social effect? There is a crowd (1) of nominal followers; (2) of bigots; (3) of controversialists; (4) of ceremonialists.

II. See how difficult it is for a simple-minded and earnest inquirer to find his way to Jesus Christ through such throngs. (1) As a question of mere time, they make it difficult. (2) They distract the inquirer's thoughts. (3) They chill the inquirer's ove.

III. Against this set the glorious fact that there is no crowd, how dense or turbulent soever, through which an earnest inquirer may not find his way. There is a way to the Master —seek and thou shalt find; the Master, not the crowd, must redeem and pardon the sons of men.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 193.

REFERENCE: **xx. 31.**—W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. ii., p. 194.

Chap. xx., ver. 32.—"Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you?"

THE narrative, of which these words form a part, tends to illustrate in a remarkable manner the nature of true prayer; and to show us His mind respecting it, to whom or through whom all Christian prayer is made.

I. "What will ye that I should do unto you?" The question was asked for a twofold reason. Christ will have the suppliant in prayer aware of the depth and the nature of his own need; and He will have the same suppliant grasp by faith the power and will to grant his prayer which reside in Him to whom he addresses it. To them who never seek Him, or seek Him but little, His power seems but an idea; but to them that seek Him daily, and commune with Him without ceasing in the craving language of the asking heart, His power is a great stream of strength flowing into them—secret, but well recognized; calm, but mighty, supplying their empty places and fortifying all the accesses of sin; and His love is the constant watchful tenderness of a Friend who knows the depth of their wants—a bright face ever bent over them, full of fatherly pity and of unfathomable wisdom. And in order to this real and definite sense of God's daily power and love in answering prayer, prayer must be a real and definite thing also.

II. If we would pray aright we must live in the constant habit of self-examination. We must also know Him with whom we have to do. We pray to, not a God of the imagination, not a God whose being and attributes we have reasoned out for ourselves, but a manifested God. When the Christian says, "Have mercy on us, miserable sinners," he expresses not only the heavy burden of his own heart in the description of himself, but the reliance of his faith on Him that died for him and is now at the right hand of God in His nature, exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. If then we would pray aright, we must know Christ with a personal and appropriating faith. When the Lord says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" the longing after more of His likeness, the yearnings of our hearts for holiness and love and truth, these will be the eager and ready reply; and no such prayer shall be sent up without fetching down the gracious answer, "According to your faith, so be it done unto you."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 146.

REFERENCES: xxi. 1-9.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 18. xxi. 1-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., pp. 242, 471. xxi. 1-13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 287. xxi. 1-16.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 90. xxi. 1-17.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 263.

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Chap. xxi., ver. 3.—"And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them."

I. OUR Lord's words illustrate, first of all, the deliberateness

with which He moved forward to His agony and death. When He sent the two disciples for the ass and the foal which were tied up in the street of Bethphage, He was, as He knew, taking the first step in a series which would end within a week upon Mount Calvary. Everything, accordingly, is measured, deliberate, calm. It is this deliberateness in His advance to die; it is this voluntariness in His sufferings which, next to the fact of His true Divinity, gives to the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ its character as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

II. Our Lord's words illustrate, secondly, the exact nature of His claims. "If any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, "The Lord hath need of them." Now, what is the justification of this demand? It is a question which can only be answered in one way—namely, that Christ was all along the true owner of the ass and the foal, and that the apparent owner was but His bailiff. He claims what He has lent for a while, He resumes that which has always been His own; we hear the voice of the Being to whom man owes all that he is, and all that he has—"whose we are, and whom we serve."

III. Our Lord's words show how He can make use of all, even of the lowest and the least; nay how, in His condescension, He makes Himself dependent on them for the fulfilment of His high purposes. It was of the ass and of the colt at Bethphage that He Himself said, "The Lord hath need of them." The ass and colt, insignificant in themselves, had become necessary to our Lord at one of the great turning-points of His life; they were needed for a service unique and incomparable, which has given them a place in sacred history to the very end of time. They were to be conspicuous features in that great sacrificial procession—for such it was—in which He, the prime and flower of our race, moved forward deliberately to yield Himself to the wills of men who to-day can shout "Hosannah" and who to-morrow will cry "Crucify." The needs of God. It was surely too bold an expression if He had not authorized us to use it. And yet there they stand, the words "The Lord hath need of them." He needed that ass and that foal in the street of Bethphage.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 209.

REFERENCES: xxi. 3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 241; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii., p. 80. xxi. 4.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 1. xxi. 4, 5.—G. Butler, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 20.

**Chap. xxi., ver. 5.—"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee."**

I. NOT the Law only, but the Prophets also, did our Lord with the greatest carefulness fulfil, that no one mark or tittle of the letter should fail of the Word of God. "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee," etc.

II. "When He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." This was the answer of the multitude, for the common people were not ashamed of the lowly Nazareth and the despised Galilee. What a wonderful contrast is this to His next appearing, for which we daily wait; when all the dead shall be moved at His coming and all the living; when the sun, moon, and stars shall fall, and earth and heaven shall take wing before His face, and when there will be no more asking, "Who is this?" for all shall know Him!

III. When He came in so much meekness without, and with so much sorrow of heart within, He showed by a remarkable sign what was the occasion of that sorrow. "He went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold," etc. The lesson is, that it is of the very utmost importance how we keep holy the House of Prayer. Worship God aright, and all will be well. Come before Him without fear, and all your life will be as a city over which Christ weeps.

I. WILLIAMS, *Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels*, vol. i., p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxi. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 405; vol. xviii., No. 1,038; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 284; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. i., p. 79.

**Chap. xxi., ver. 10.—"And when He was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"**

WHAT think we of Christ?

I. The merely humanitarian view of the person of Christ involves in it: (1) the gravest intellectual difficulties. There was something peculiar in His intellectual solitude: the difference between Him and other thinkers was not such as, for example, between Shakespeare and other authors. You know all through that Shakespeare belongs to the same species as the others; but Christ constitutes an entire genius by Himself. Compare the Sermon on the Mount with the utterances of the most exalted teachers, and say if it be conceivable that He who delivered it was no more than a Jewish country artisan,

whose life had been spent in one of the lowest villages of the most illiterate portion of the land. (2) But the difficulties which beset the humanitarian view of the Saviour's person from the intellectual side are as nothing compared with those which it has to encounter on the moral. Remember the honesty and integrity by which He was characterized, and then say how these qualities are to be reconciled with the claims which He put forth as One who had come down from heaven for the express purpose of teaching celestial things, if these claims were not well founded. (3) Note the testimony of history to the Deity of Christ. It is the nature of moral evil to propagate itself. Christ turned the tide for all after-time, and to-day the sole corrective agents at work upon the moral and spiritual condition of men may be traced to Christianity.

II. But now, supposing that we all receive Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, what then? What is involved in that reception? It involves: (1) that we should implicitly believe His teachings. It is a mockery for one to say that he believes in the Deity of Christ, and then to cavil at his words or to deny their truth. (2) If we believe that Jesus Christ is the God-Man, there is involved in that an obligation to rely alone on His atoning work for our salvation. (3) If we receive Christ as the God-Man, there is involved in that reception an obligation to obey His commandments. The practical rejection of our Lord's Divinity by the disobedience of our lives is a more prevalent heresy than the theoretic denial of His Deity, and it is far more insidious and pestilential.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Limitations of Life*, p. 127.

REFERENCES: xxi. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 364; J. O Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 241. xxi. 12, 13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 181. xxi. 13.—B. F. Westcott, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 458; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1. xxi. 15.—S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 194; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 124; A. Macleod, *Talking to the Children*, p. 237. xxi. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,785; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 208. xxi. 16.—W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 205. xxi. 17.—W. H. Jellie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 230. xxi. 17-22.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 99. xxi. 18-20.—G. W. Butler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 298; Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 98. xxi. 21.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 536.

**Chap. xxi., ver. 22.—"All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."**

THESE words are said to us as God's children. This is the one condition of our asking and having. "Ask," our good Lord

would say, "your Father as His children, believing in Him, trusting in Him, hoping in Him, trusting yourselves with Him."

I. It is not, then, said to those who will not live as God's children. He who will not live as God's child makes himself wiser than God. He chooses what God chooses not; he frames to himself a world of his own, and makes its laws for himself. He contradicts or disbelieves the goodness of God, in that he chooses what God refuses, refuses what God chooses.

II. It is not said as to things which we cannot ask as God's children. To covet passionately the things of this life, even without actual sin; to long to be above those around us; to desire to be admired, thought of; to have a smooth easy course, to be without trial,—this is not the temper of God's children. To gain these things might be to lose the soul.

III. We are not children of our heavenly Father if we forgive not from our hearts each other their trespasses; and therefore any secret grudge, any mislike of another, any rankling memory of injury, hinders our prayer being heard.

IV. If we ask not earnestly, we either do not really want what we ask for, or we mistrust that God will give it, and do not really look to Him as our Father.

V. There are many degrees of asking, many degrees of obtaining. God willeth to win thee to ask of Him. He will often give us things more than we could look for, that we may remember how He heareth prayers, and ask Him for what He is yet more ready to give, because it is more precious for our eternal good. He draws us on as earthly parents do their children to trust Him in a more simple, childlike way. Pray, and thou shalt know that God will hear thy prayers. Pray as thou canst, and pray that thou mayest pray better. The gates of heaven are ever open that thou mayest go in and out at thy will. He Himself, to whom thou prayest, prayeth for thee, by His voice, by His love, by His blood. How can we fail to be heard, when, if we wish, God the Holy Spirit will pray in us, and He to whom we pray is more ready to give than we to ask?

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 372.

THE Miracles of Prayer.

Can man change the mind of God? Will God, on the prayer of man, change any part of that wondrous order which He has impressed on His fair, visible creation?

I. God does through man's acts become other to him than He was before. The returned soul knows that not only is its

whole self changed towards God, but that the relations and actions of God towards it are also changed. And this change has often been wrought by Jesus through the prayers of others. Which are greatest, the miracles of nature or the miracles of grace? Which is the greatest interference (to use men's word)—to change passive, unresisting nature, or man's strong, energetic, resisting will, which God Himself so respects that He will not force the will which He has endowed with freedom, that it might have the bliss freely to choose Himself? And yet these stupendous spiritual miracles are daily renewed. The love of the Church, of the pastor, the mother, the combined prayers of those whom God has inspired with the love of souls, draw down on the prodigal soul many a wasted or half-wasted grace, until at last God in His providence has laid the soul open to the influence of His grace, and the soul, obstructing no more the access to Divine grace, is converted to God and lives.

II. Whether the whole sequence of natural phenomena follow a fixed order of Divine law impressed once for all upon his creation by the almighty fiat of God, or whether the proximate causes of which we are cognizant are the result of the ever-present action of the Divine will, independently of any such system—these are but the ways of acting of the Omniscient. The difficulty lies in the Omniscience itself, which knew all things which were not as though they were. Who doubts but that God knew beforehand that awful winter which cut off half a million of the flower of French chivalry? But whether that winter, which stood alone in the history of Russian climate, came only in the natural sequel of some fixed laws, or whether it was owing to the immediate fiat of God, the adaptation of these natural phenomena to the chastisement of that suffering host was alike exact, the free agency of its leader was alike unimpaired.

III. Once more, the availableness of prayer has been contrasted with the availableness of human remedies; its unavailableness has been insisted upon, if combined with human sloth. Who bade separate trust in God from the exertions of duty? Certainly not He who, even in His highest concerns,—the salvation of our souls,—bade us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure.

IV. One soul there is for which thy prayers are absolutely infallible—thine own. Before thou hast uttered the prayer, so soon as through the grace of God thou hast conceived it in

thy heart and embraced it in thy will, it has ascended to the Eternal throne. Already it has been presented to Him who in all eternity loved thee and formed thee for His love. It has been presented by Him, Man with thee, who, as Man, died for thee, who, in His precious death, prayed for thee, Man with thee, but also God with God. How should it fail? Thy prayer cannot fail, if thou, through thine own will, fail not thy prayer. E. B. PUSEY, *Selected Occasional Sermons*, p. 295.

REFERENCES: xxi. 22.—E. B. Pusey, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 273; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 69.

**Chap. xxi., vers. 23-27.**

WHY Christ could not make His Authority known to the Pharisees.

I. John had said to the Pharisees, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say unto yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham." They were saying within themselves, "We have Abraham to our father," while they had no likeness to Abraham. They were wrapping themselves up in a comfortable security, while they had a sense of inward hollowness. They were exulting in the profession of faith in an unseen God; they were not believing in the unseen God.

II. Our Lord did not arbitrarily refuse to tell the Pharisees what His authority was unless they could tell Him whether they believed in John's mission. He refused to tell them what they could not understand except upon a previous condition. Were they still the proud, contemptuous, self-exalting men whom John had denounced? They could not know what Christ's authority was; they could not enter into its meaning, let it be defined to them with the most Divine accuracy. Had they listened to John's words? had they felt that they as much as any Gentile needed to be cleansed, and that God must cleanse them? had they received the call to repentance as the best, most comfortable, most Divine of all messages, not only to the publican, but to them? Then they were in a condition to be taught about that mysterious government over the heart and will which Christ carries on; then they could feel something of the freedom and universality and penetrating quality of His royal grace. Every prophet had come proclaiming that valleys were to be exalted, that mountains and hills were to be made low, because every prophet had come witnessing of a Divine

and eternal and invisible kingdom, which claims all as its subjects, which refuses its blessings to none who do not choose to be without them. F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 95.

REFERENCES: xxi. 23-46.—Parker, *Inner Life of Christ*, vol. iii., p. 109. xxi. 25.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99.

**Chap. xxi., ver. 28.—"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."**

I. THERE are two spheres of human duty, the individual and the social. Individually, it is our duty to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" to listen to the voice of God, and hearing, to obey it; to "keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity;" to keep our minds in the love of that truth which maketh free; and so walk along the path of life that the heaven-appointed guardians of the human soul, the two great angels of duty and conscience, may hold us by the hand and never turn upon us their calm looks of awful indignation. But this individual duty cannot be performed without due recognition of our social duty. Our own souls will suffer, our Christian life will shrivel into a paltry and repellent thing, unless, in the spirit of love and not of officialism, of humbleness and not of religious superiority, we recognize our solemn responsibility to our brethren who are in the world, and learn out of noble motives to do noble deeds.

II. How are nations saved? When they are conquered? when they are in peril? In what way can deliverance come to them? It comes by the work of a single man, or by the united passion and energy of a whole people, or by both combined. Churches and religions are saved in exactly the same way. A decadent nation must pray, "O God, give us heroes, give us patriots, give us men." And a weakened Church and faith must pray, "O God, give us prophets, give us saints." One man who is in earnest, one man who can see the beckoning hands which others cannot see, and who amid the universal roar of base and virulent gossip has heard the "still small voice" which others cannot hear—such a man will do more than a million of the languid and conventional. What made Christianity conquer the world? Not wealth, not learning, not eloquence, not crystallized dogmas, not the splendour of an amazing hierarchy, or the formalism of an external worship. No, but innocence; no, but absolute unworldliness; no, but the moral vividness of great examples; no, but the sincerity of faith which, seeing Him who is invisible, hurled itself against the unbelief of the world—the force of a belief which counted all things as

dross for the work of God. "You see the day is passed by when the Church could say, Silver and gold have I none," said Innocent III. when he saw the bags of gold being carted into the Vatican. "Yes, holy father, and the day is also passed when the Church could say to the cripple, Arise and walk."

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxi. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,338; J. Morgan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 5.

Chap. xxi., vers. 28-30.

PROMISING without Doing.

We promise to serve God; we do not perform; and that not from deliberate faithlessness in the particular case, but because it is our nature, our way not to obey, and we do not know this; we do not know ourselves or what we are promising. Note several instances of this kind of weakness:—

I. That of mistaking good feelings for real religious principle. How often is a man incited by circumstances to utter a virtuous wish, or propose a generous or valiant deed, and perhaps applauds himself for his own good feeling, and has no suspicion that he is not able to act upon it. It escapes him that there is a great interval between feeling and acting. He knows he is a free agent, and can on the whole do what he will; but he is not conscious of the load of corrupt nature and sinful habits which hang upon his will, and clog it in each particular exercise of it.

II. One especial case of this self-deception is seen in delaying repentance. Nothing but *past* acts are the vouchers for *future*. Past sacrifices, past labours, past victories over yourselves—these are the tokens of the like in store, and doubtless of greater in store. But trust nothing short of these. "Deeds, not words and wishes," this must be the watchword of your warfare and the ground of your assurance.

III. Another plausible form of the same error is a mistake concerning what is meant by faith. Dead faith, as St. James says, profits no man. What, on the other hand, is living faith? Do fervent thoughts make faith living? St. James tells us otherwise. He tells us *works*, deeds of obedience, are the life of faith. As far as we know anything of the matter, justifying faith has no existence independent of its particular definite acts. It may be described as the temper under which men obey; the humble and earnest desire to please Christ which causes and attends on actual services.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 165.

Chap. xxi., vers. 28-31.—"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," etc.

We must not lose sight of the fact that in this parable both the persons who were addressed were *sons*. And this is exactly our position. In a sense—in a high and true sense—we are all God's children, not by creation only, but by baptism, and we cannot escape. The weight of life lies upon the fact of our being God's children.

I. Three points lie on the surface of this subject. (1) The argument of the Father's appeal lay upon the sonship. (2) A call to grace is a call to work. (3) There is the instantaneousness of obedience; that which at once makes the essence of a duty, the ease of a duty, and the possibility of a duty. "Go work to-day in my vineyard."

II. Notice the first reception: "He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went." He stands out to us, then: a man thoroughly honest, but opposed; strong in character, resolute in will; his nature hostile to God's will; but presently, grace working in his mind, and his mind working with the grace, he is abashed and ashamed; rightly perceiving, he follows quickly on juster views; and he repented, and went. Why had not this man, this son, the will to work in his father's vineyard? (1) He did not really love, or know his father. (2) He liked the imaginary independence which he felt in being his own master outside. (3) The labour which he knew would be inside contrasted unpleasantly in his mind with the play and gaiety of the outer life which he was now leading. (4) The urgency of the demand little suited his desultory and procrastinating mind.

III. Whether in the interval between the "I will not" and the "he repented, and went," there were any particular influences which were brought to bear strongly on his mind, we are not told. (1) No doubt his father's wish was still echoing in his heart. (2) The vineyard would stand to him every day in a happier aspect. A higher ambition began to fill his mind. (3) Above all, his sentiments towards his father changed. He saw him as he was—his friend, the best of friends, the one who loved him as no other had loved, or could love, him. Nearness to his father became the one object of his life, and so his changed feelings reversed his steps; the door of the vineyard was open to him yet; and the young man "repented, and went."

J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 46.

Reference: xxi. 28-31.—J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 121.

Chap. xxi., vers. 28-32.

THE TWO SONS.

In this parable there are two distinct warnings to two distinct classes, with corresponding encouragements attached, as shadows follow solid bodies in the sunlight;—to the publicans and harlots first, and next to the Pharisees of the day.

I. There is a class amongst us answering to those publicans and sinners to whom Jesus was wont to address the message of His mercy. To this class the parable proclaims a warning. A rank, soporific superstition has crept over these free and easy spirits—a superstition as dark and deceitful as any of the inventions of Rome. Men seem actually to persuade themselves that their very wickedness will supply them with a passport into heaven. It is a false hope. Without holiness no man shall see God. The absence of a hypocritical pretension to holiness will not be accepted instead of holiness. It was all right with the profane son in the parable; but mark, he repented and obeyed. But to this class the parable speaks encouragement as well as warning. So great is God's mercy in Christ that even you are welcome when you come.

II. There is still a class corresponding to the Pharisees, and to these the Lord in this parable conveys both warning and encouragement. There is encouragement to the Pharisee as well as to the publican to turn and live. There is no respect of persons with God; the Pharisee was as welcome to Christ as the publican, if he would come. When a self-righteous man discovers himself at last to be a whited sepulchre, and, counting his own righteousness filthy rags, flies to Christ as his righteousness, he is instantly accepted in the Beloved.

W. ARNOT, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 223.

I. EVERY man has a mission from God.

II. The mission which most of us are sent into the world to fulfil is described in the short practical word "work."

III. The scene of the work is God's vineyard. (1) Our own hearts. (2) Our own households. (3) Scenes of daily life. (4) Church and its institutions.

IV. The work is pressing and urgent, and the time at which, if never before, God would have us begin, "to-day."

V. See how, according to this parable, men treat the command. (1) Some profess to obey, but do actually disobey. (2) Some refuse at first, but afterwards obey.

J. R. BAILEY, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 100.

I. "A CERTAIN man had a vineyard." It is under this guise that our God appears to us. He is as the holder of a vineyard, who is dependent on help for securing increase. The vineyard needs to be irrigated; the soil must be loosened about the roots of the vines; weeds must be struck down on their first appearance; over-luxuriant shoots of the vine must be pruned. Using this similitude, God comes condescendingly with the illustration of the fact that He asks service of His people.

II. The owner of the vineyard asks his two sons for help in its cultivation. With a father's authority he says, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." The demand is for immediate service, and that throughout a definite time of short duration.

III. The poor beginning made by both sons on that day when the father's demand for service came upon them must first have attention. When the father looks to his sons for help in cultivating his vineyard, he receives a direct refusal from the first, and though the other makes a promise of help, that promise is not kept. There lies before us here a representation of the conduct of our whole race in disobeying God's demand for service. When God calls to men for service there is universal disobedience to the call.

IV. While universal disobedience is the first result which God beholds, He is not left altogether without service on the earth. But that service comes after disobedience, being in all cases a recoil from it, brought about by the working of God's own grace. In the case of many there is at length entrance of service by the gateway of repentance. The repentance which turns from sin and guides to pardon, guides by the next step to the beginning of a life of holy service. The passing sight here given us of this son entering by the vineyard gate, with all the signs of preparation for work, is the parabolic representation of an essential feature of Christian life—true service following on repentance.

H. CALDERWOOD, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 163.

REFERENCES: xxi. 28-32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 742; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 347; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 438; Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 294.

Chap. xxi., ver. 30.—"And he answered and said, I go, sir and went not."

SWIFT TONGUE, SLOW FOOT.

I. The first characteristic of the swift tongue and slow foot is unbelief. "I go, sir." How admirably this expresses the acknowledgment of that character which gives a general assent to the fact of God's Being and Providence, but without power

of disposition to make that faith the rule of life, like those Israelites of whom it was said by St. Paul, "So then we see they could not enter in because of unbelief."

II. Another characteristic of the swift tongue and slow foot is indifference. Truth is truth; but if men are not interested in it, it will not influence the life. There is truth like useless furniture in the head, and there is much that may be called the useless furniture of religion. Men are rather puzzled than profited by it. They are certainly not interested by it. They bow their heads in assent; they give their acknowledgment to it; but they never live in the light of it.

III. Another impediment is in the manifoldness of intellectual objects; hence it is that wit, learning, and imagination may be —they need not be, they ought not to be, but they may be— hindrances to religion.

IV. And then there is another cause in the burden: "And he went not." For, usually, every man has *one* load to carry which retards him in his journey. Men have usually only one besetting sin; but they have one strong predominant energy in their nature which may become a vice, a sin that easily besets them. But their whole character is in *that one;* the conflict hangs upon that.

V. Religion will only become the light, law, and rule of our lives when it, too, becomes a ruling passion. It is the presence of an idea, like the presence of a person, which gives to it its power; we must hunger and thirst after righteousness; we must live in the very life of the holy Law, and count ourselves "not to have already attained, but to be still following after."

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 241.

REFERENCE: xxi. 30.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 414

Chap. xxi., ver. 31.—"Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

I. THE command, "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard," is given to us at all times. It was given us at our baptism; it was given to us at the first dawnings of our understanding, when the still, small voice of conscience warned us that we must not be selfish, or false, or disobedient, but must be subject to a higher and purer law than that of our own inclinations. It is given to us at every change or crisis of our lives.

II. The command is addressed to us as *sons*. Would that we could all feel that we are indeed God's children; that we are not called to the odious task-work of slaves, but to the

labour of love, which every son should render to a Father from whom he has received every blessing which he enjoys. Observe, again, that our Father trusts us and places confidence in us when He bids us work. The words are, "Go work to-day in My vineyard." He trusts that we shall not disobey Him.

III. Consider the answers given by the two sons, and their subsequent conduct when commanded to go and work in their father's vineyard. The first shows by his blunt and sullen reply, "*I will not*," that he is the representative of those who are utterly reckless and careless; he does not deceive his own conscience by making excuses; he flatly refuses obedience. The other son, in the first part of his conduct, has many representatives. His after-conduct should warn us against the snares which may prevent us from fulfilling our resolutions, and which may cause us to resemble the second son's miserable end. Whether we regard the danger of self-righteousness and self-confidence, or of trusting only to good impulses instead of devoted Christian resolution and the help of God's Spirit, or the ordinary temptation of selfishness on the one hand, and forgetfulness on the other, there is no one, however good the resolutions which he has formed, who has not abundant reason to pray God that he may be delivered from the withering condemnation of the text.

BISHOP COTTON, *Marlborough Sermons*, p. 78.

REFERENCES: xxi. 33-41.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 40; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 447. xxi. 33-44.—R. Calderwood, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 7. xxi. 33 46.—W. Arnot, *The Parables of Our Lord*, p. 237. xxi. 37.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 12.

Chap. xxi., ver. 44.—"And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

I. EVERY man has some kind of connection with Christ.

II. The immediate issue of rejection of Christ is loss and maiming.

III. The ultimate issue of unbelief is irremediable destruction when Christ begins to move.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxi. 42.—J. Vaughan, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 27. xxi.-xxv.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 324.

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